■ Business / B2-4

How to get hold of artworks for investment

■ Sports / A28

UConn trips Duke, sets up NCAA final vs Georgia Tech

■ Infotech / B12

IBM backs Pinoy software firm vs Microsoft

■ World / A10

Madrid blast suspects blow selves up

Tanong ng Bayan / A24

Dapat na bang payagang mag-asawa si Father?

MAMAYANG ALAS-10 NG GABI

Student facing theft raps commits suicide

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—What is a 14-year-old boy's life worth?

Two hundred pesos?

A little less than two weeks ago, at about 2 a.m., Xaviery Val Yancy Engle took out a blan-

STUDENT/ A20

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

US plans to deploy Marines in region

WASHINGTON—After stationing American troops in the Philippines to train local soldiers in counterterrorism, the United States plans to deploy Marines and special operations forces on high speed vessels along the Straits of Malacca to flush out terrorists in one of the world's busiest waterways.

The deployment of US forces along the nar-

US PLANS/ A22

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Monday, April 5, 2004 ★★ 68 pages / 8 sections / vol. 19 / no. 119 P18 website: www.inq7.net

DUAL RITES Devotees outside the Quiapo Church in Manila wait for their palm fronds to be blessed yesterday, Palm Sunday, which recalls Jesus' triumphant arrival in Jerusalem. But they also carry an image of the Crucifixion, which culminates Christ's Passion on Good Friday.

ERIK ARAZAS

GMA aide wants CPP 'fronts' out of polls

Party-list hopefuls aiding NPA, Gonzales charges

By Carlito Pablo

WHILE THE government wants the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to lay down its arms in favor of electoral struggle, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales is seeking the disqualification from the May 10 elections of six party-list groups he considers CPP front organizations.

In a presentation before the National Security Council on April 2, Gonzales identified the party-list groups as Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Anakpawis, Anak ng Bayan, Migrante and Suara Bangsamoro.

Bayan Muna won three seats in the 2001 party-list elections, allowing former National Democratic Front (NDF) spokesperson Satur Ocampo, women's rights advocate Liza Maza and labor leader Crispin Beltran to sit as members of the House of Representatives.

The NDF is a group of underground organizations that includes the CPP.

Maza and Beltran recently resigned their seats to take charge of the election campaign of Gabriela and Anakpawis, respectively.

"We have strong suspicions that the Countrywide Development Fund (CDF) amounting to more than P500 million was used to aid and abet the armed struggle of the NPA (New People's Army, the armed wing of the CPP)," Gonzales told President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos and leaders of Congress who attended the NSC meeting in Malacañang.

The CDF is a "pork barrel" now known as the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), which legislators use to finance their pet projects. A congressman representing a district is allotted P65 million in PDAF a year and a party-list representative, P35 million.

In an eight-page briefing paper, Gonzales said the disqualification complaint against the six party-list groups, which may be filed with the Commission on Elections, could be anchored on the following:

- Violation of the Revised Penal Code "governing disloyal conduct of government officials and employees."
- Prohibition on the use of "illegal and violent means to promote party-list goals" as defined by law.
- Violation of Republic Act No. 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act for the "blatant use of public funds in

GMA/ A20

Sale of gov't power plants can avert crisis—GMA

SELLING the generation plants of the state-owned National Power Corp. could help avert the coming acute power shortage, President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday.

"We have to privatize our generation cost now and we also have to bring in new power plants," the President said in a statement.

Her spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, said Ms Macapagal had already directed Energy Secretary Vincent Perez to privatize not sequentially but all at the same time Napocor's generation assets.

"The President has ordered Secretary Perez to prepare the bidding documents for all and to sell the moment anybody is willing to buy," Bunye said.

Ms Macapagal issued the statement after Federico Lopez, First Generation Holdings Corp. president, warned that a nationwide power crisis could come earlier than the government expected.

Lopez said it might be too late to avert the power shortage in some areas in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Bunye, however, maintained that the President was sticking to the Department of Energy's projection that a power crisis could hit the country in 2008 and not 2007 as predicted by Lopez.

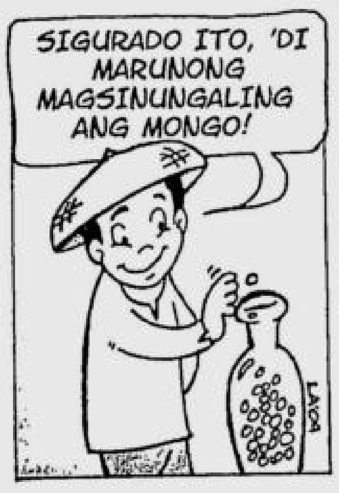
Lopez said the country would need between $2 billion and $3 billion and at least a four-year lead time to finance and build new power plants.

He said the only way to avoid the return of chronic blackouts was to allow power utilities like the Lopez-controlled Manila Electric Co. to contract their own new power supplies.

His proposal, however, raised fears that it might result in "sweetheart" deals similar to the controversial deals between Meralco and Lopez-owned power generation firms.

In an interview over RMN radio, Bunye said the President had made the power industry "next in the reform agenda" because a crisis could delay economic progress.

SALE/ A20


SIGURADO ITO, 'DI MARUNONG MAGSINUNGALING ANG MONGO!
LAXA

Who's ahead? Ask the mongo, says bookshop

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

SAN JOSE CITY—It's not as scientific as the surveys of the Social Weather Stations or of Pulse Asia, but Mahar Mangahas and Felipe Miranda may be able to pick up a few pointers on how to conduct polls that would generate public excitement—and a few laughs.

A bookstore in San Jose City in the traditionally opposition province of Nueva Ecija has launched its own informal survey using mongo beans or seeds—mungbeans, if you will—to gauge the public pulse on the candidates in the May 10 presidential election.

WHO'S/ A22

Shabu lab turned into rehab unit

By Christian V. Esguerra

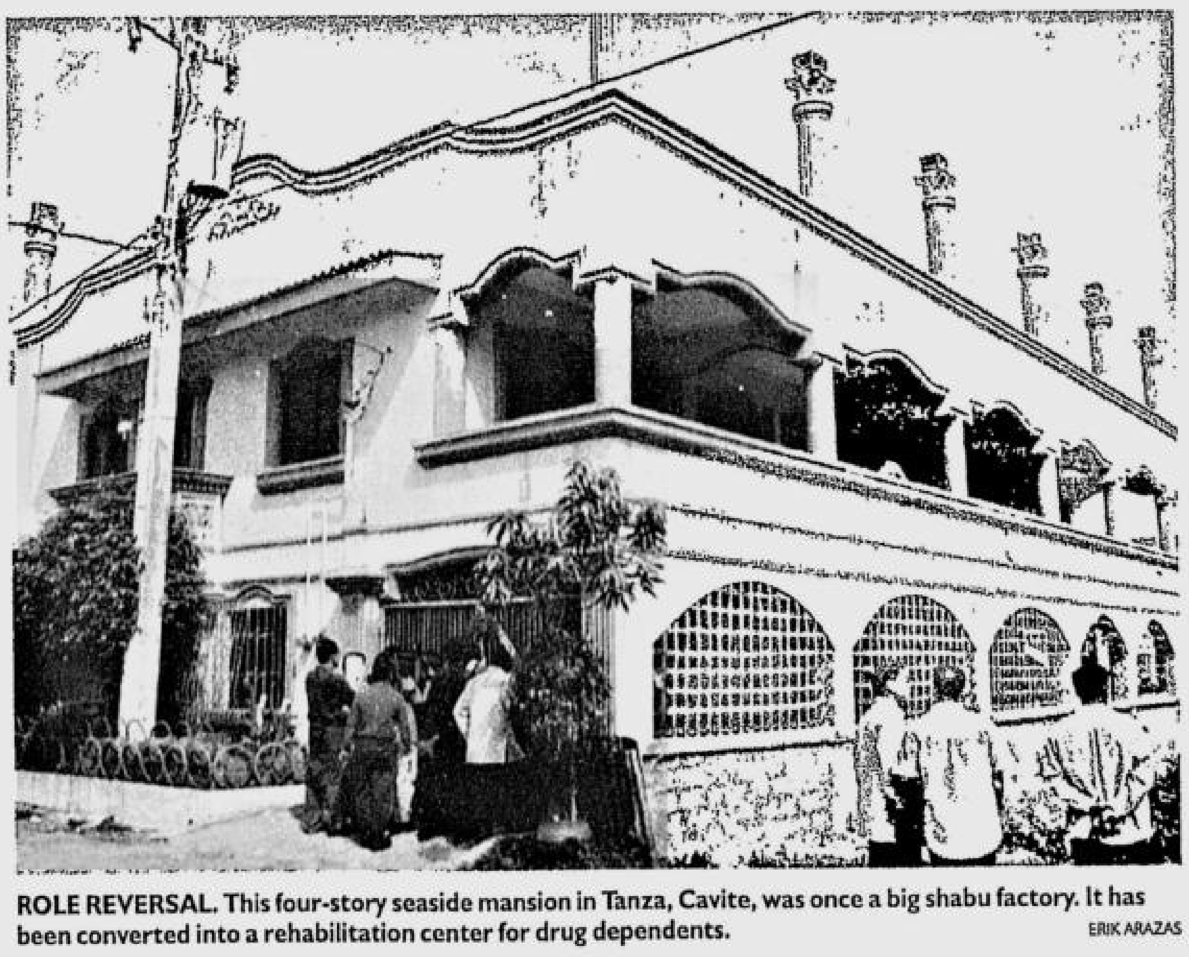
JAILED Taiwanese drug trafficking suspect Jackson Dy has lost his multimillion-peso estate in Cavite to his own supposed victims.

The four-story seaside mansion in Barangay Capipisa in Tanza town, which he allegedly used as a shabu factory, has been converted into a rehabilitation center for some 250 drug users.

Gone are the 10-foot pressurized chamber and other equipment that—each day—supposedly produced some P60 million worth of high-grade shabu.

"One could only imagine how many lives that volume destroyed," Deputy Director Gener-

SHABU A22



ROLE REVERSAL. This four-story seaside mansion in Tanza, Cavite, was once a big shabu factory. It has been converted into a rehabilitation center for drug dependents.

ERIK ARAZAS

Poe outbursts show potential for abuse of power

ANALYSIS

By Amando Doronila

THE REAL Fernando Poe Jr. is coming through with a thin skin as he cracks up under the heat of a closely contested presidential election campaign.

Poe revealed his inability to cope with pressure when he lost his temper at a TV reporter covering his rally. He harshly berated and shamed GMA 7 reporter Sandra Aguinaldo when she came close to him on the campaign stage and attempted to do a stand-up report.

Adding insult to injury, Poe's aides claimed Aguinaldo tried to "steal the show" from their presidential candidate. Aguinaldo had no reason to grab the limelight from the actor.

Sen. Loren Legarda, Poe's running mate, and the actor's aides pressed Aguinaldo to apologize to their candidate. Aguinaldo was right in refusing to apologize. She is owed an apology by Poe for interfering with her job as a reporter. Not only did he humiliate her, he also bullied her.

It was not the first time that Poe had encounters with members of the media covering his campaign. Some weeks ago, he glared and raised a fist at a Reuters photographer who was taking pictures of him in a setting he didn't like.

These incidents reveal early signs not only of Poe's instinctive hostility toward journalists but also his troubled relations with the media. The incident with Aguinaldo has blown up into a high-profile controversy damaging to Poe.

It took place in the midst of the hardening deadlock between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Poe in poll surveys. Last week, the Social Weather Stations survey covering the March 11-19 period was released. It showed Ms Macapagal and Poe locked in a statistical tie—the actor polled 35 percent and the President, 33 percent.

Neither candidate can risk

POE'S/ A22

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The whole country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly over Mindanao.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/04/05/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Abu bomber loose in Metro Manila

**By Christian V. Esguerra
and Blanche Rivera**

THERE IS one Abu Sayyaf terrorist still at large in Metro Manila, despite the arrest of six suspected bombers in separate operations more than a week ago.

The man holds some of the explosives his group had planned to use in bombing several targets, according to a reliable security official.

A "balik-Islam" or Muslim convert, he also works as support staff of the cell Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani had embedded in Metro Manila. But with the rest of his group now in police custody, the remaining terrorist poses no threat, the source said.

The Abu man had a communication line to Redendo Cain Dellosa, the confessed bomber of SuperFerry 14, the source added. He lost touch with Dellosa after the ferry blast suspect was arrested by police intelligence officers near the Metro Rail Transit station in Boni Avenue, Mandaluyong, on March 22.

"He's been isolated from the group since then," the source told the INQUIRER. "He was spotted three days ago and it's just a matter of time before he's arrested."

The rest of the Janjalani cell—Dellosa, Abdusaid Lim, Radsamar Sangkula, Al-hamsed Manatad Limbong, alias "Kosovo," Abdulwali Villanueva and Jamil—will be presented at a Camp Crame press conference at 10 a.m. today.

Asked if the Abu Sayyaf was still a threat in Metro Manila, police intelligence director Robert Delfin was optimistic it had been kept at bay since the cell was practically dismantled.

Another thing going against the bandit group is its "estrangement" from the al-Qaida international terrorist network of Osama bin Laden.

Al-Qaida, through its regional affiliate Jemaah Islámiya, has long been suspected of infusing funds in local terrorist activities.

According to Delfin, Bin Laden and other top al-Qaida leaders were not amused when their men trained a group of Abus on terrorism in Mindanao nearly 10 years ago.

The group communicated with Bin Laden through his brother-in-law Mohammad Jamal Khalifa, and Ramzi Yousef. Khalifa is said to be Bin Laden's point man in the Philippines and adviser of the eight-man core group that started the Abu Sayyaf in 1989.

Yousef, along with Abdul Murad, was arrested by local police in 1995 for allegedly plotting to kill Pope John Paul II. They were later convicted for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City.

Delfin said the training was meant to find out if the bandits could keep up with al-Qaida in terms of "intellect" and, later, be worthy of financial support.

"But Bin Laden thought they didn't match the level of intellect of al-Qaida," he said in Filipino, citing intelligence reports on the training."

The al-Qaida also considered the Abu Sayyaf "too parochial" since the bandits were focused only on terrorist activities in the country.

Meanwhile, Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla has asked the ulamas or Muslim religious leaders to keep an eye on the madrasahs and mosques, particularly in Mindanao, to ensure that legitimate Muslim activities were not infiltrated by terrorists.

Capalla, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and an active member of the Bishops-Ulamas Conference warned that terrorists could enter the country in the guise of missionaries from Egypt and Pakistan, "and incite people to join terrorist activities."

He admitted that the possibility of terrorist infiltration among Muslim communities had been discussed in recent meetings with the ulamas.

Capalla hailed the efforts of law enforcement agencies in the country for nabbing suspected terrorists before they could do any harm.

He stressed, however, that despite the arrests, the threat of terrorism remained in the Philippines so Muslim leaders needed to be "very careful" to ensure that no Muslim fanatic was enticed to join extremist groups.

He dismissed the Abu Sayyaf as a bandit group "that does not have any more clear doctrinal conviction" and are terrorizing people through kidnappings simply for money.

Palace rules out probe of Reyes

**By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.
and Christine O. Avendaño**

MALACAÑANG will not order an investigation into allegations that National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force chief Angelo Reyes was involved in kidnapping unless the Chinese-Filipino community, the main target of kidnap-for-ransom syndicates, had lost confidence in the former defense secretary.

In an interview with RMN radio, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said that only the group of Teresita Ang-See had the right to file a complaint against Reyes because the Chinese-Filipino community was the one focused on this problem.

Reyes was earlier accused of having had a hand in the abduction of the two children of Rep. Jules Ledesma and in the murder of airport executive Lilia Diaz.

The widows of Rogelio Ramoso and Ricky Original, alleged members of KFR gangs, claimed their husbands were hired guns of Reyes, whom they accused of masterminding the kidnapping of Ledesma's kids and the killing of Diaz.

"If there is a basis for their accusations, Ang-See's group should have been the first to file a complaint. But everybody can see that the Chinese-Filipino community's support of Reyes has become even broader in the face of these charges," Bunye said.

Bunye described these charges as "personal attacks" against Reyes by the opposition, which had urged the President to conduct an investigation into the incidents.

In Bago City, Negros Occidental, presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. said Saturday that law enforcers should make sure that their operations are well-planned to prevent people from being caught in the crossfire like what happened in Navotas last week.

"*Sana* next time *tiyakin nila* movements *nila. Pag-aralan mabuti. Huwag padalos-dalos* (Next time they should make sure about their movements. They should plan properly and do their operations with caution)," Poe said.

Poe was reacting to the bungled operations last week of NAKTF operatives following a shoot-out with suspected kidnappers in a crowded street in Navotas that resulted in the death of a 4-year-old girl and injuries to other bystanders.

But Poe conceded that tragedies like these happened as law enforcers conduct pursuit operations.

"*Masakit man, pero minsan nangyayari eto*," he said. "It's unavoidable, we do not want this to happen but sometimes it does."

Tapos na ang sakit ng ulo.

PARACETAMOL

Congratulations to Batch 2004 from PARACETAMOL BIOGESIC

If symptoms persist, consult your doctor

Some bets junking Gloria

By Norman Bordadora and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WILL PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo suffer the same fate as the late Speaker Ramon Mitra, Jr. 12 years ago?

Mitra who was the administration's candidate in the 1992 presidential elections, was routed in the polls after he was junked by his own party mates in the local level in favor of his chief rival, Fidel V. Ramos.

This possibility surfaced yesterday after local candidates of the ruling Lakas-Christians Muslims Democrats party to which the President belongs were found distributing sample ballots with Ms Macapagal's presidential rival's name on them.

Like Ms Macapagal, Mitra then had the huge advantage of a well-oiled political machinery and had government resources at his disposal. Despite these, he suffered an ignominious defeat which led to his eventual retirement from politics.

With almost a little more than a month left before the May 10 elections, there are already indications that history just might repeat itself.

In Legaspi City in Albay, sample ballots bearing Legaspi Rep. Carlos Imperial's name were being distributed over the weekend with Sen. Panfilo Lacson as the choice for president and Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla as senator.

The sample ballot also bore the names of mayoral candidate Michael Imperial, the congressman's grandson, and vice mayoral bet Boroy Arroyo, as well as those of 10 candidates for councilor.

The Imperials are candidates of the ruling Lakas party and the Nationalist People's Coalition which has a working coalition with the administration in the House of Representatives.

The Lakas-NPC's official candidate for president is President Macapagal-Arroyo, not Lacson, a member of the opposition party Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino. Padilla is also a member of the LDP.

The Lacson camp has said that the sample ballots were not from their camp.

"Imperial and I have yet to talk because I've been busy with the campaign in Makati. But any form of support is welcome," said LDP secretary-general and Lacson campaign leader, Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino.

Aquino said they have received many feelers from members of other parties but local candidates still don't want to make their identities known officially.

WAVING IN HOLY WEEK
Fr. Michael Keenan, parish priest of the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran, Parañaque City, blesses the palm fronds being waved by the faithful in observance of Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week, yesterday. ERIK ARAZAS

FPJ backs out of yet another debate

By Christine O. Avendaño and Norman Bordadora

GUIHULNGAN, Negros Oriental—Leading presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday ignored the challenge of his chief rival, President Macapagal-Arroyo, to a debate in Bacolod City on their plans to revive the moribund sugar industry, insisting on his earlier position that a debate only causes divisiveness.

Poe, the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), however, told reporters of his plans to address the problems confronting the sugar industry, particularly the rampant smuggling of imported sugar.

"Whoever wins the presidency, he should address this problem of smuggling which has become rampant," Poe said in Filipino.

Poe said he got an insight into the problems of the sugar industry after meeting the other day with groups of sugar planters in Bacolod City.

Sugar industry problems

The sugar planters' groups, he said, proposed to him a six-point program to address the problems of the sugar industry such as smuggling.

Reelectionist Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras, formerly with Lakas-CMD and now supporting Poe's candidacy, told reporters that sugar planters' associations like the Negros Oriental-San Carlos City Association are supporting Poe's presidential bid.

Paras said that sugar associations have long been fighting against the unabated smuggling of sugar which has resulted in falling sugar prices.

He said there was no need to debate on the sugar industry's problems because it was during Ms Macapagal's tenure that sugar prices went down because of smuggling which has remained unresolved.

As this developed, another presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson said that presidential debates would only be useless if one or two candidates fail to show up.

"If two or three candidates don't show up, it defeats the purpose of the debates. If there are debates, all candidates should attend," Lacson said.

Lacson made the pronouncement in the wake of another scheduled debate set on April 13 by the Commission on Elections.

"It is a chance for people to ask the presidential candidates questions so they can compare their stands on issues like population, graft, and foreign policy," Lacson said.

Lacson said debates give voters a chance to hear for themselves and compare the presidential candidates' respective platforms of government.

Measuring stick

The senator said debates are a measuring stick with which the candidates should be judged based on their performance, track record and plans for governance. He said this is why it is important for all.

The Comelec and the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting have been preparing for the April 13 debate.

Lacson earlier challenged his presidential rivals to a debate on family planning, charging them of not being candid enough about their population program for fear of a backlash from the influential Catholic Church.

Leading presidential candidate Poe and his close contender, Ms Macapagal, however, have opted not to join the debates with the latter insisting that she will only join if Poe would also participate.

Lacson, for his part, said that he would not participate in a debate with the President, saying she has the most questions to answer, particularly on the country's economic woes and the rampant graft and corruption in government.

Only Alyansa ng Pag-asa standard bearer Raul Roco and evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva attended the last presidential debate.

In the latest survey results released by the Social Weather Stations, Poe leads Ms Macapagal, followed by Roco, Lacson, and Villanueva. *With a report from Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Followers say Baguio execs 'sabotaged' Bro. Eddie rally

By Frank Cimatu and Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Bro. Eddie Villanueva's coordinators here have complained that their candidate's rally last Saturday was "sabotaged" by local officials.

Pastors belonging to different evangelical groups in the city had secured a permit to hold a Bangon Pilipinas rally at the Athletic Bowl in Burnham Park, only to discover the facility cluttered with the props of another group scheduled to hold a concert at the same venue next week.

The coordinators were busy apologizing to reporters for the disarray on the stage when the INQUIRER chanced upon them.

"We were told that (the city government) had allowed them (the other group) to set up their props this early, even after City Hall allowed us to set up the stage for Brother Eddie's Baguio campaign," said Annabelle Codiasc-Bangsoy, one of Villanueva's coordinators here.

The Bangon members also complained about the absence of a police escort, which they had asked for for their candidate. Bangsoy said Villanueva had received death threats in Pampanga.

"Of course, Baguio is very safe. But (the movement's) security personnel wanted the best for their presidential candidate," she said.

Noli Balatero, executive assistant of Mayor Bernardo Vergara, said Villanueva's woes were actually a coordination problem among the city government's administrative personnel.

Balatero said Vergara promised to find out who was responsible for the security mix-up, as well as for the problems that Villanueva's camp encountered at Burnham Park.

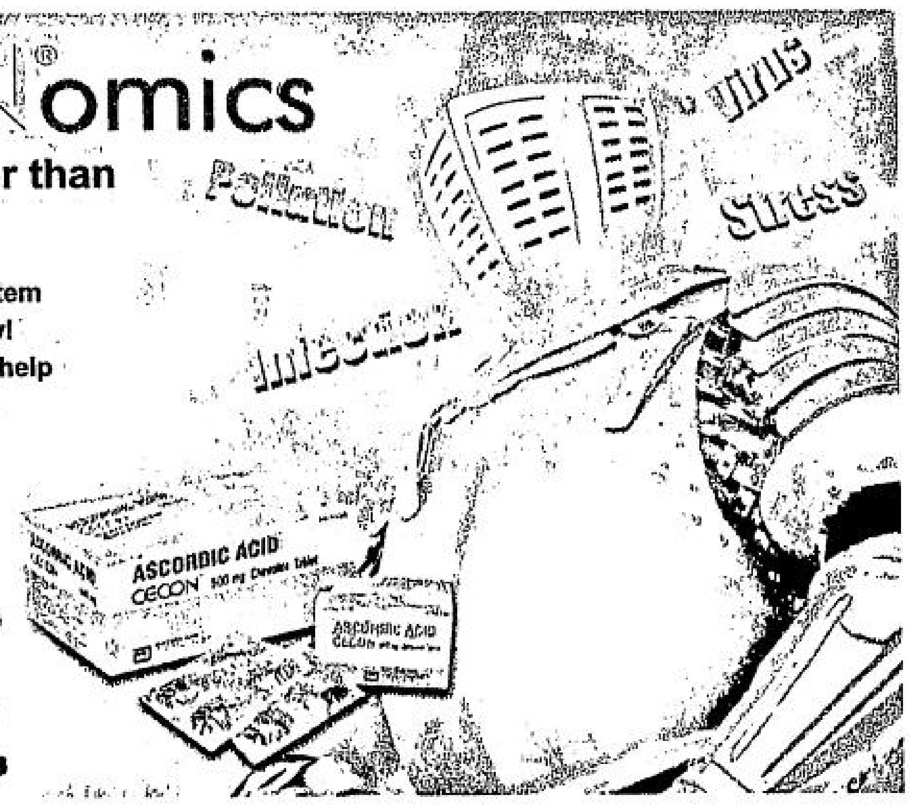
Villanueva stayed here until Sunday morning and toured the city market before returning to Metro Manila.

Meanwhile, a group of artists has banded together to form Visual Artists for Brother Eddie (VABE). They are Malang, Adi Baensantos, Arlene Villaver, Chris Mirang, Fred and Norma Liongoren, Jane de la Paz, Jes Evangelista, Jimmy and Sandra Kwong, Jucar Raquepo, Mona Lisa Santos, Remy Boquiren, Romulo Olazo, Sheila Tiangco, Soler Santos and Ted Luna.

The group has to promised to donate 200 of their works to be sold in order to raise money for Bro. Eddie's campaign.

Other artists who have committed themselves to support the group are Julie Lluch, Imelda Cajipe Endaya, Lino Severino, Carlo Magno, Arnel Borja, Chitz and Eileen Ramirez, Bobi Valenzuela, Ross Capili, Eghai Roxas, Inna Naanep Vitasa, William Yu, and Carlota, Rey and Tala Contreras.

Other artists who may want to join VABE can call Tina Angeles at tel. no. 912-43-19 and 912-46-40 or the West Gallery at 411-03-36, 411-9221 and 634-12-84.



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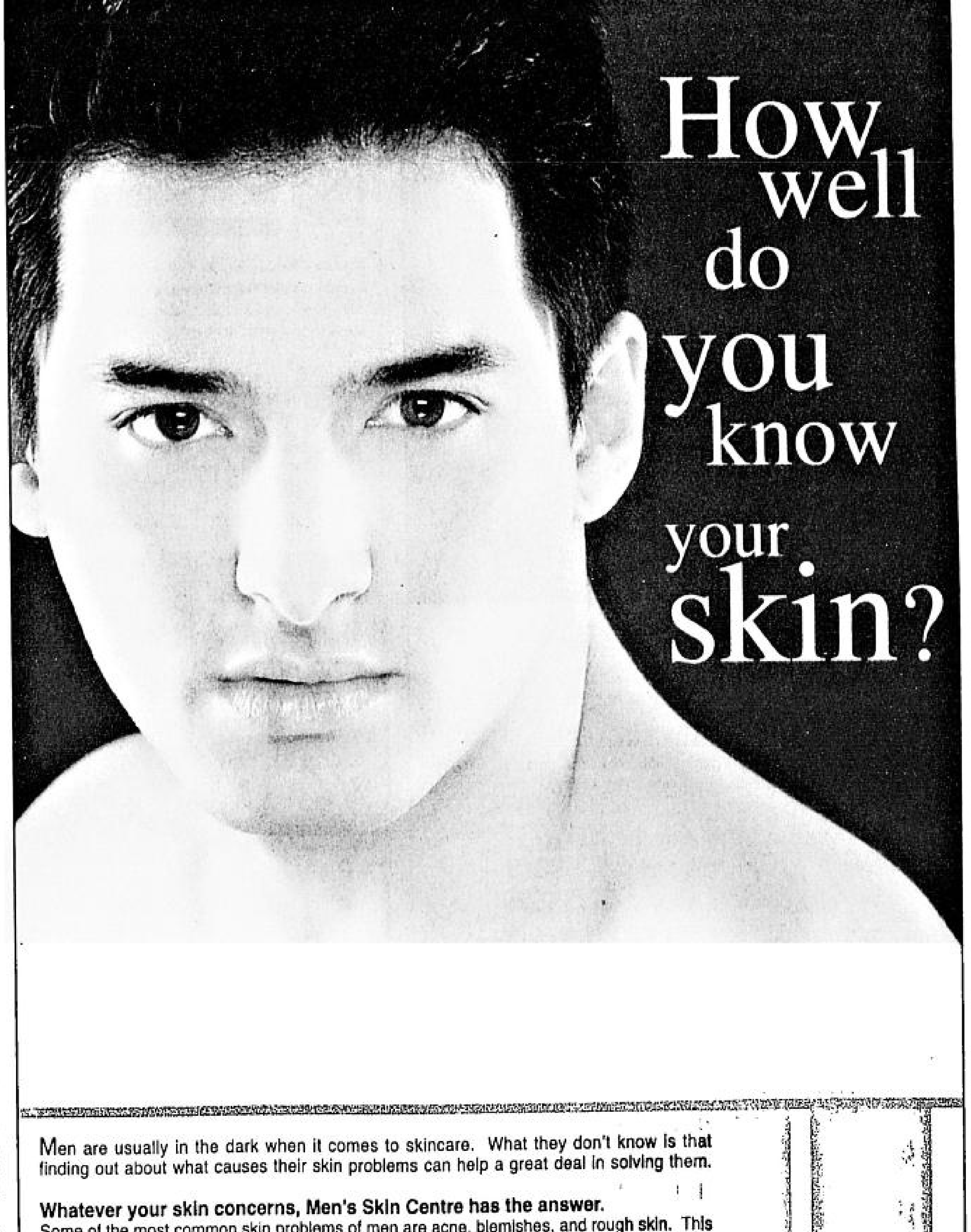
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More desertions hit Roco camp

By Carlito Pablo

ALYANSA ng Pag-Asa's Raul Roco wears the brightest shirt among the country's five presidential candidates. But five weeks before the elections, it appears to have lost luster.

Four more of his key supporters have defected to President Macapagal-Arroyo, apparently dealing a further blow to the former education secretary's presidential hopes.

The ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats yesterday identified the four as former Representatives Rodolfo Tingzon (Laguna), Antonio Bengzon (Pangasinan), Venice Agana (Bohol) and Gualberto Lumauig (Ifugao).

Lumauig is considered the biggest catch in the group, being the former spokesperson of the Lakas party during the term of President Fidel Ramos. He had headed the so-called "political group" in the Roco camp, which was composed of former members of the Lower House.

"These defections can only mean that President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign is winning over more key supporters from rival camps because the President has a clear vision of where to take this country," Lakas executive director Jose Ma. Rufino said in a statement.

More defections are expected from rival groups, Rufino said, adding: "This is already a trend and it will continue toward election day."

Late last month, three other Roco supporters defected to the Macapagal camp—former Representatives Jerome Paras (Negros Oriental), Luz Bacunawa (Masbate) and Emil Ong of Eastern Visayas, who was national food administrator during the term of President Corazon Aquino.

Rufino said the defections were "indicative of Ms Macapagal's surge based on her strong performance in fighting crime, terrorism and the drug menace, and in seriously pursuing peace negotiations with Muslim and communist insurgents."

Rufino also said most members of the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. were sticking with Ms. Macapagal.

Front-running presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s camp said recently about 90 local leaders and candidates of Lakas, NPC and the Liberal Party had bolted to the actor's camp.

Rufino downplayed the Poe camp's claim, saying 70 per cent of the NPC was solidly behind the President.

"All but one of the 19 NPC governors are for President Arroyo, and of the 60 NPC congressmen, only 11 have left and the majority are strongly supporting the President," Rufino said in a statement.

RP opens Dubai outpost

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINES will open a new consulate in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, on April 7 to serve the more than 60,000 overseas Filipino workers there.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert and other officials are set to fly either today or tomorrow to Dubai for the formal opening ceremonies of the new consulate. But Albert has yet to announce who the consul general in charge of the consulate will be.

The new consulate will be housed in an existing building where the Philippine Overseas Labor Office is also located.

Before, Philippine embassy officials and staff had to travel all the way from the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi to provide consular services every Thursday.

Dubai, UAE's commercial center, is located in the northern part of the emirate while Abu Dhabi lies in its southern part. Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Maktum bin Rashid al-Maktum, is also UAE's vice president and prime minister.

Raul Hernandez, director for Gulf States of the DFA's Office of Middle East and African Affairs, explained why it took some time for the department to open the consulate, despite appeals from the Filipinos in Dubai.

"Behind every Success, is a Noble Undertaking."
Grace G. Bocobo
Mary Ann Grace G. Bocobo
Chief Instructor
Manila

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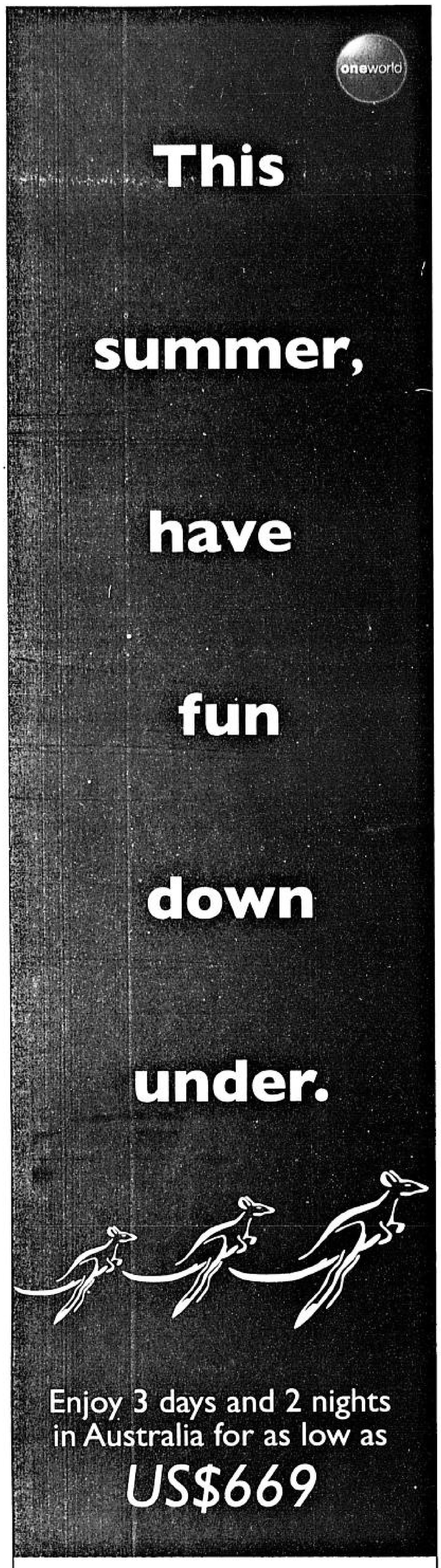
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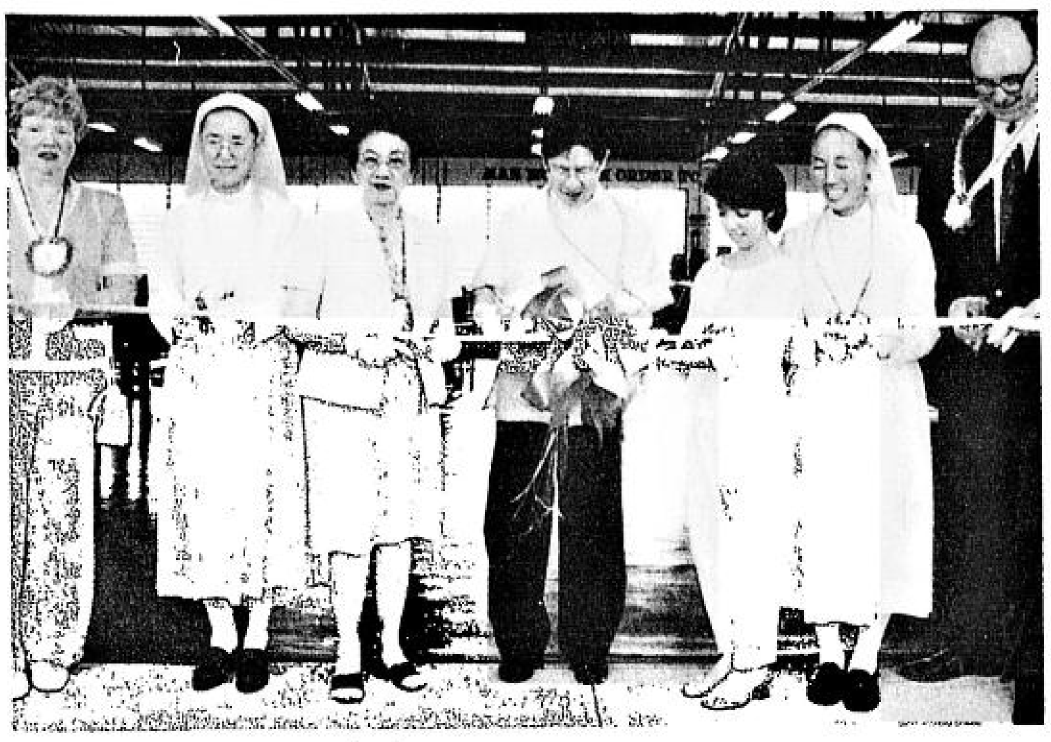
Per DTI-NCR Permit no. 0687, series of 2004

Manila pushes beatification of poor youths' benefactor



THE NEWEST Boystown complex is inaugurated by, from left, Glory Sullivan, Sr. Michaela Kim, former President Corazon Aquino, Bishop Luis Antonio "Chito" Tagle, Presidential daughter Luli Arroyo, Sr. Sylvia park and Tom Sullivan.

"EVERY foreign land is his home; every home, a foreign land."

These words from the Epistle of Diognetus aptly describe the late Msgr. Aloysius Schwartz—American "servant of God" whose beatification is currently being proposed to the Vatican by the Archdiocese of Manila.

Schwartz, founder of the religious congregation Sisters of Mary in Pusan, Korea, and the Philippines, was the benefactor of thousands of impoverished youths in the two countries.

It was in Pusan that he started his best-known charity work, the Boystown and Girlstown Program, assisted by the congregation shortly after its founding on Aug. 15, 1964 in the same city.

Schwartz came to Manila for the first time in 1983 as Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for International Understanding. He saw that the needs of poor Filipino children were not unlike those of his young wards in Pusan: to get an education that would shore up their chances for a bright future. Two years later, with the help of Jaime Cardinal Sin, then Archbishop of Manila, Schwartz and two Korean members of the Sisters of Mary established Boystown and Girlstown in Sta. Mesa, Manila.

Young Filipino women soon joined the congregation and helped in the work which would subsequently be undertaken in other countries as well, including Mexico, Guatemala and Brazil.

Before his death in 1992, Schwartz and his team of intrepid women had set up three complexes in the Philippines that served as homes for more than 7,500 high school students. Two more complexes have opened since, and the Sisters of Mary have been taking care of an average 12,000 high school boys and girls from indigent families yearly.

Aside from a high school education, these young beneficiaries receive free food, clothing and shelter, plus medical and dental services. Most important, they undergo values and spiritual formation.

For Boystown students, the secondary curriculum is beefed up by special training in such vocational skills as electronics, machine shop and welding, computer technology, mechanical processes, auto mechanics and driving. On the other hand, Girlstown students also learn dressmaking, industrial sewing machine operation, steno-typing, bookkeeping, electronics and basic computer systems.

The newest Boystown complex in Barangay Adlas, Silang, Cavite, was inaugurated last March 16 to commemorate Schwartz's 12th death anniversary. The complex is equipped to accommodate 2,200 students. Among the friends who attended the blessing were former President Corazon Aquino and Presidential daughter Lourdes Angelina "Luli" Arroyo.

In 1989, Schwartz was afflicted with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and was told he had only three years to live. He chose to stay here, and he died at Girlstown Sta. Mesa. He was buried at the former Boystown complex in Silang.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, April 5, 2004
· Monday of Holy Week

1st Reading:	Is 42:1-7
Gospel:	Jn 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where he had raised Lazarus, the dead man, to life. Now they gave a dinner for him, and while Martha waited on them, Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus.

Then Mary took a pound of costly perfume made from genuine nard and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair. And the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Judas, son of Simon Iscariot—the disciple who was to betray Jesus—remarked, "This perfume could have been sold for three hundred dinarii and turned over to the poor." Judas, indeed, had no concern for the poor; he was a thief and as he held the common purse, he used to help himself to the funds.

But Jesus spoke up, "Leave her alone. Was she not keeping it for the day of my burial? (The poor you always have with you, but you will not always have me.)"

Many Jews heard that Jesus was there and they came, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests thought about killing Lazarus as well, for many of the Jews were drifting away because of him and believing in Jesus.

Commentary

Judas will be with us many times during Holy Week—almost every day. There must be significance in this. We cannot ignore him; we have to look at him. He comes to us already judged and condemned in John's gospel. He stands there, hopeless, expecting no mercy.

John wrote, "He had no concern for the poor; he was a thief and used to help himself to the funds." The other gospel writers only record what Judas did, and refrain from passing judgment on him. As if in contrast to John's bristly presence we have Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus. What is she doing to the atmosphere? "She took a pound of costly perfume and anointed the feet of Jesus. The whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged," Jesus had said (Mt 7:1). Our judgment may be factually true: that's the bait on the trap. But it is not the whole truth: that's the trap. All our judgments are incomplete. We don't know the full truth about anyone. And we hardly begin to understand the mercy of God.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

POLITICAL LAW (ADMINISTRATIVE LAW)—Due process—Well settled is the rule that the essence of due process is simply an opportunity to be heard, or, as applied to administrative proceedings, an opportunity to explain one's side or an opportunity to seek a reconsideration of the action or ruling complained of. Not all cases require a trial-type hearing. The requirement of due process in labor cases before a Labor Arbiter is satisfied when the parties are given the opportunity to submit their position papers to which they are supposed to attach all the supporting documents or documentary evidence that would prove their respective claims, in the event the Labor Arbiter determines that no formal hearing would be conducted or that such hearing was not necessary. In any event, as found by the NLRC, petitioner was given ample opportunity to present its side in several hearings conducted before the Labor Arbiter and in the position papers and other supporting documents that it had submitted. The court finds that such opportunity more than satisfies the requirement of due process in labor cases. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Quisumbing, Second Division, Mariveles Shpyard Corp. vs Court of Appeals, G. R. No. 144134, November 11, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA

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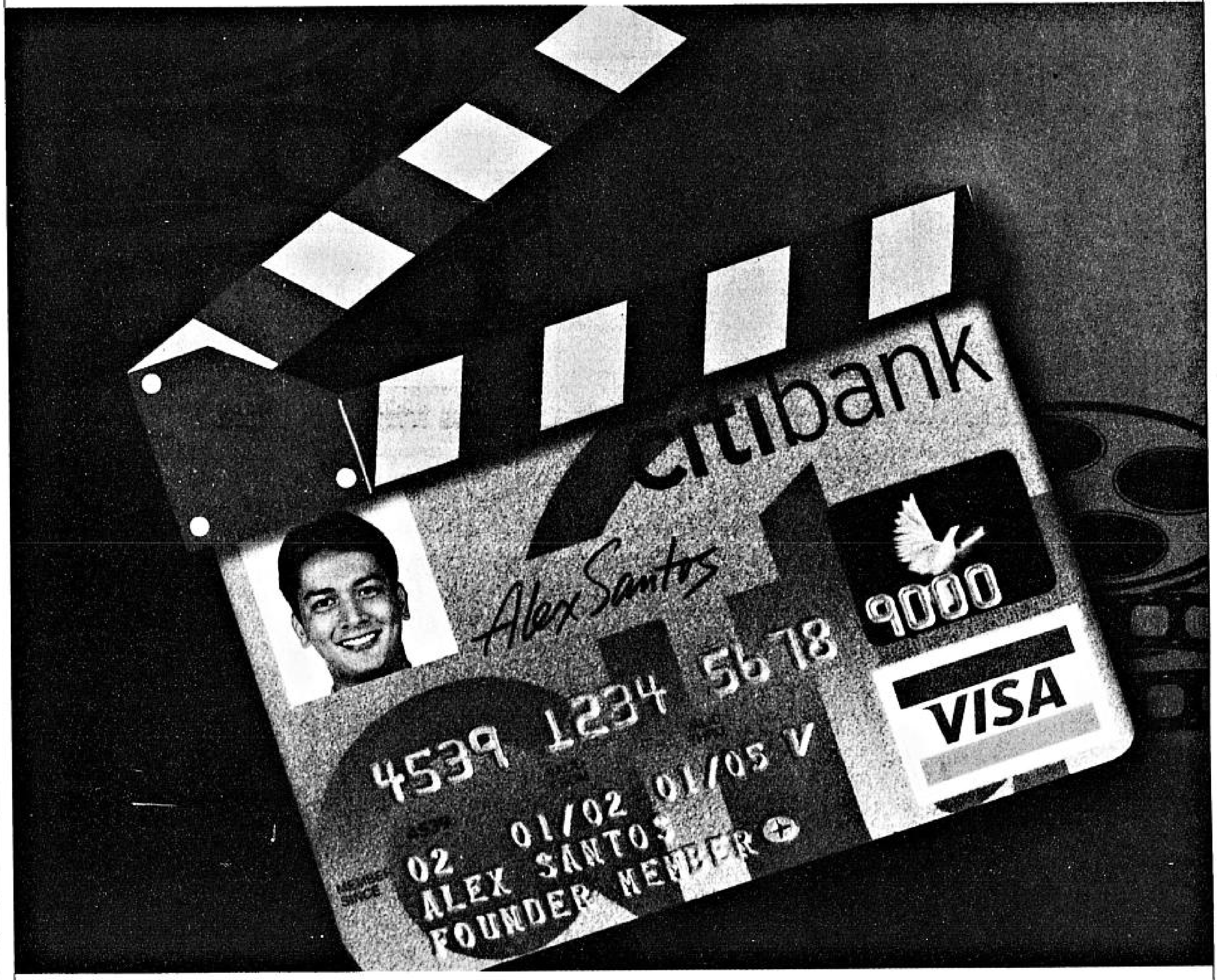

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Poe chats up, regales media

By Carla P. Gomez, *PDI Visayas Bureau*
and Christine O. Avendaño

FERNANDO Poe Jr.'s right hand is wrapped in a bandage. Yesterday, he gave two different reasons, one of them in jest, on two separate occasions.

In Bacolod City, he told the INQUIRER it was because his hand was sore from all that handshaking since the start of the campaign in February.

"I had it covered so that people would reach for my left hand instead. It is hard to explain why I cannot shake their hand with my right," said the actor, standard-bearer of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

To reporters during a briefing in Guihulngan, Negros Oriental, Poe's explanation was: "*Naglaba ako, e* (I did the laundry)." He said his wife, actress Susan Roces, had scolded and punished him after the incident on Thursday with television reporter Sandra Aguinaldo.

Roces herself said the bandage was necessary because, aside from the swelling that was obvious from the exposed right thumb, several cuts and scratches could be infected with more handshaking. "This way, the hand would heal faster."

But even Poe's left wrist already had a red scratch mark.

The actor's wife had joined the Negros sorties since she is a Negrense herself and spent her childhood in Bacolod.

She noted, amused, that the cuts were inflicted mostly by women: "When he reaches down from his float during a motorcade—that's when he gets scratched, especially by women's long nails."

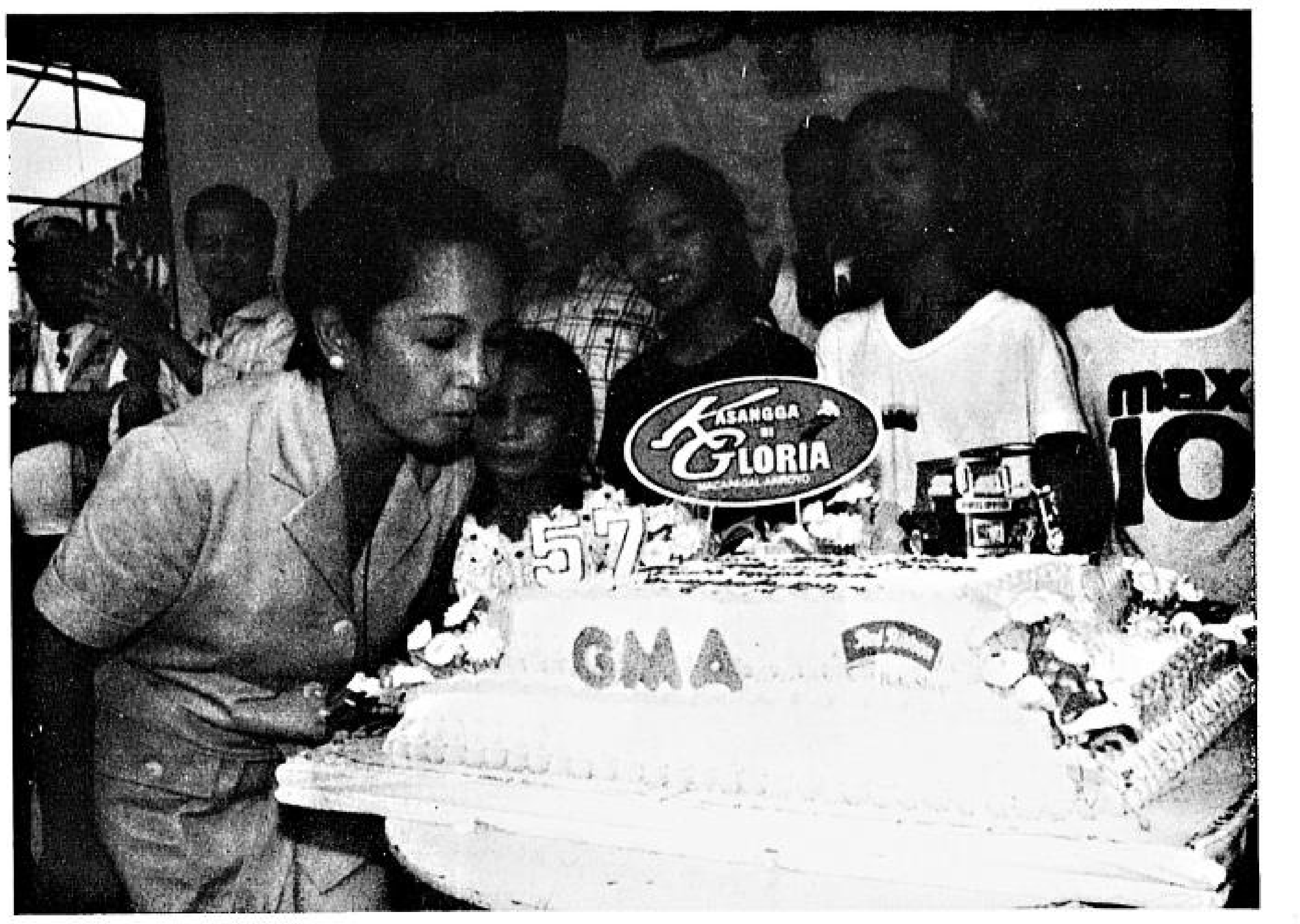
The chit-chat with reporters in Guihulngan took place during lunch at the house of Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras. It was the first time that Poe had sat down to a meal with the large group of journalists covering his campaign.

His relationship with media men has been far from rosy. He wasn't trying to avoid them, he said, the way he avoided show biz journalists at the start of his acting career.

"I shouldn't do that now," he said, admitting that reporters "scared" him, both with their questions and with the tape recorders and microphones constantly being shoved at him.

Poe has patched things up with Aguinaldo, a reporter for GMA 7, whom he berated onstage during a KNP rally in Iloilo last week.

And yesterday over *sotanghon* (noodles) and macaroni salad, he obliged the journalists with a chat and interview.



PRESIDENT Macapagal blows out the candles on an early birthday cake presented to her Saturday by the tricycle operators and drivers of Metro Manila who will mobilize 15,000 tricycles in Quezon City today in a show of support for her.

GMA returns to roots on birthday

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo celebrates her 57th birthday today by returning to her late father's hometown of Lubao, Pampanga.

The President, daughter of President Diosdado Macapagal—known as the Poor Boy from Lubao—will hear Mass at the San Agustin Church. Then she will have breakfast with Lubao farmers and residents at the churchyard, according to Press Secretary Milton Alingod.

Her birthday is expected to be free of campaign activities.

Apart from this, simultaneous activities around the country will be held in honor of her birthday.

The President will receive 57 dozen red roses with a white one in each dozen, a birthday gift from husband, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Evangeline "Luli" Arroyo, the only daughter of the President and First Gentleman, is expected to lead a Habitat-sponsored program to build a "Gloria Village" for the poor of Angeles City.

She and the First Gentleman are also scheduled to inaugurate a drug rehabilitation center in Cavite.

There will be nationwide tree-planting activities spearheaded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Two hundred flowering trees will be planted at the Ecology Center in East Avenue, Quezon City. Trees will also be planted in Wright Park in Baguio City, Abra, Apayao and Benguet.

The Department of Health will hold bloodletting activities in various hospitals in Metro Manila and key areas of the country.

In Nueva Ecija, Gov. Tomas Joson III offered the support of his political "secret weapons" as a birthday gift to the President. Joson, head of the Bagong Lakas ng Nueva Ecija party (Balane), said his family's political strength lies in the support of the women of Nueva Ecija who work as volunteer barangay health and nutrition workers, daycare teachers and personnel in the province's family planning program. Ms Macapagal met with some 4,000 women from Nueva Ecija at the multipurpose gymnasium of the Central Luzon State University in Muñoz on Saturday.

FPJ's wish

Casting politics aside, opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. wished the President the best on her birthday.

"I also wish her good health and the best of everything. I wish her ... and her family a good day," Poe told reporters yesterday while campaigning in Negros Oriental.

Poe's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, also extended birthday greetings to her dear *kumadre* and wished her "continued good health, blessings and inner peace for her and her family."

Sen. Panfilo Lacson wished his campaign pet peeve President Macapagal well on her birthday and even better days "after her retirement on July 1, 2004."

Lacson's wish was a double-edged greeting, since it expressed the senator's belief that Ms Macapagal would be defeated in the May 10 polls.

"May she enjoy life after her retirement on July 1, 2004," Lacson said in a text message to the INQUIRER yesterday afternoon.

With Lacson's allegations of graft and corruption against the President and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, the greeting could also mean a wish for the President to clear herself of the charges when she leaves Malacañang. *With Christine O. Avendaño, Norman Bordadora and Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

BRINGING DOWNTOWNS BACK TO LIFE

Revitalized downtown streets and areas – such as Rizal Avenue and Plaza Lawton in Manila and Tomas Morato Avenue in Quezon City – are giving its business a host of benefits, such as increase in retails sales, decrease in vacancy rates, and increase in property values. But downtown merchants are not the only ones gaining from reactivated downtowns. These have produced a virtual renaissance within their former deteriorated cores. Revitalized downtown streets are now active both day and night as people are being drawn to new offerings of a safer, more attractive, and pleasant environment. The emergence of more street-level establishments such as cafes, convenience stores and bookstores, have the effect of making our streets brighter, cleaner, and alive.

Downtown revitalization efforts reflect the recognition of downtowns as an asset of the community life - offering a diverse mix of business, employment, cultural, and shopping opportunities. To further spread these benefits, a seminar on "Reactivating Downtowns: Challenges, Opportunities, Tools and Techniques" will be held on April 14, 2004 at the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) on San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

Further information on the seminar can be obtained from the secretariat of the Urban Partnerships Foundation (UPF) at telephone numbers 896-1902, 895-1812, fax 890-2480 or email upf@skyinet.net.

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Devotees hail 'closure' of sacred mountain

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—At least two influential religious sects whose members climb Mt. Banahaw on a veritable pilgrimage every Lenten season have expressed approval of the temporary closure of what is widely considered a sacred site.

In a video interview conducted by staff members of Tanggol Kalikasan-Southern Luzon, a public interest environmental legal defense center based here, the leaders of the two sects which are based on Banahaw's slopes agreed that the "mysical mountain" needed a "rest."

Maximo Suarez of the "Ciudad Mistika de Dios" based in Barangay Sta.Lucia expressed certainty that majority of the 80 sects in the Quezon and Laguna sides of the mountain would respect the decision of the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) to insulate Banahaw and nearby Mount San Cristobal for five years starting this week.

Of the 80 groups, 20 are based—or have worship places—within the area covered by the directive.

Jay Lim, program coordinator of Tanggol Kalikasan, said the information campaign through media was apparently doing well.

Since the protected area was enclosed with barbed wire last week, there have been a few "forcible entries," but Lim reported that compared to the droves that usually started climbing Banahaw at this time—last year's count was 700,000—only a small number had turned up.

Supremo Jose Illustrisismo, leader of "Tatlong Persona Solo Dios" based in Barangay Kinabuhayan, pointed out that if the water sources in and around the pilgrimage place were left unprotected, "those natural water 'springs will become polluted (and) the sacredness of the mountain will become a memory of the past."

Illustrisismo recalled that when the Kinabuhayan River near his group's compound was still crystal clear, devotees washed their feet there before climbing the sacred mountain.

"Now, it's dirty and almost dry because of the intrusion of non-devotees. Devotees will never pollute any water source on Mt. Banahaw."

Besides being fenced in, the usual mountain trails—the Tatlong Tangke and Cristalino Falls routes—to the 200 *puestos* or hallowed spots atop the mountain are now being guarded by police, military and volunteer mountaineers.

PAMB's Suarez said the religious groups should take part of the blame, since not all of them took the time and effort to explain to visitors how to behave during their stay.

He recounted that in the past, pilgrims followed rigid rules: "During the climb we had to bring our own trash containers, which we carried back down. If one accidentally spilled rice while eating, he was obliged to retrieve every grain with his tongue. That was how reverently we treated Mt. Banahaw."

Korea welcomes OFWs under new scheme

FOREIGN Affairs Secretary Delia Albert yesterday announced that the Philippines, along with Thailand and Mongolia, has been chosen one of the first countries that would be allowed to send workers to South Korea under the latter's new employment permit system.

This development would help prevent overseas Filipino workers from being victimized by illegal recruiters and scrupulous employers, Albert said.

"It shows the high regard Seoul has for OFWs, especially of the mechanisms that are already in place for their recruitment and deployment, as well as Filipinos' record of compliance with the host government's laws," Albert said.

Korea plans to allow the entry of 80,000 migrant workers.

The foreign affairs chief said a memorandum of understanding will be signed middle of April between the three countries, on the one hand, and the Korean government, on the other.

Five other countries—Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, China and Kazakhstan—were named to participate in the new labor scheme, subject to their compliance with all South Korean government requirements such as the establishment of an agency to handle and monitor the transfer of their nationals to and from the country. *Jerome Aning*

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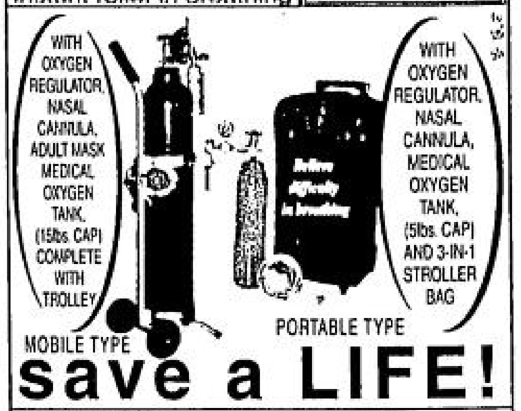
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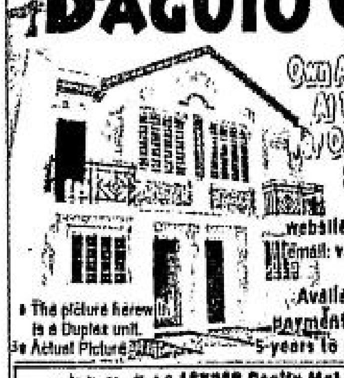

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Solons come out in defense of John O

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6 killed, 3 wounded in military, NPA clashes

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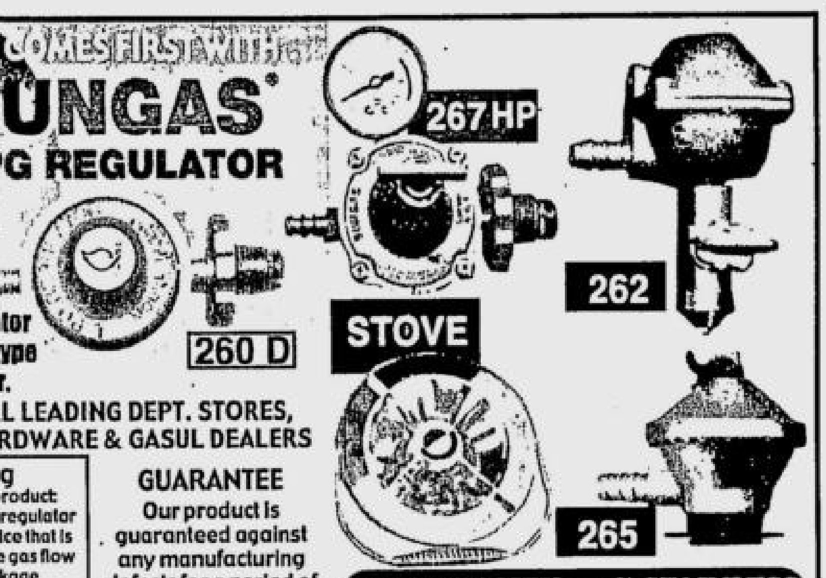
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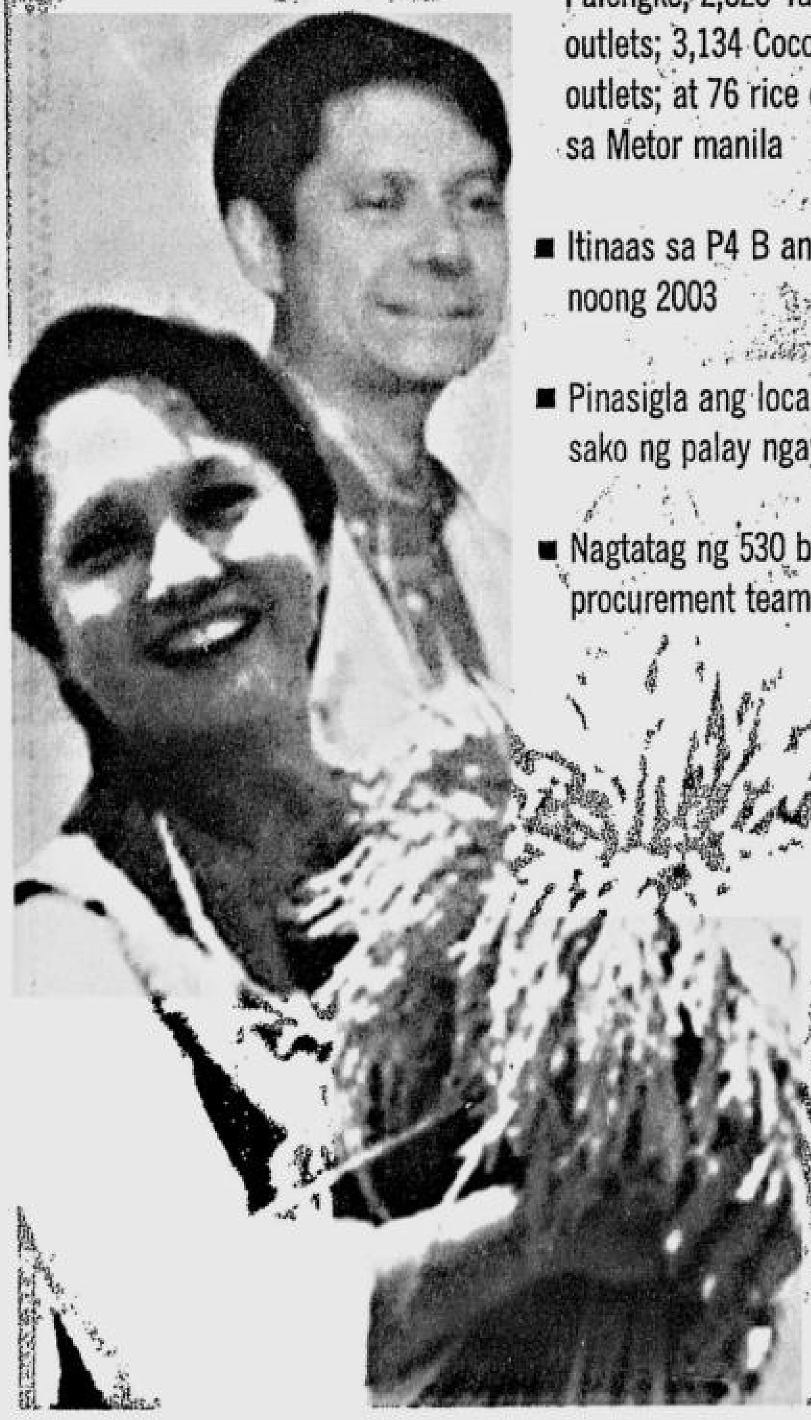

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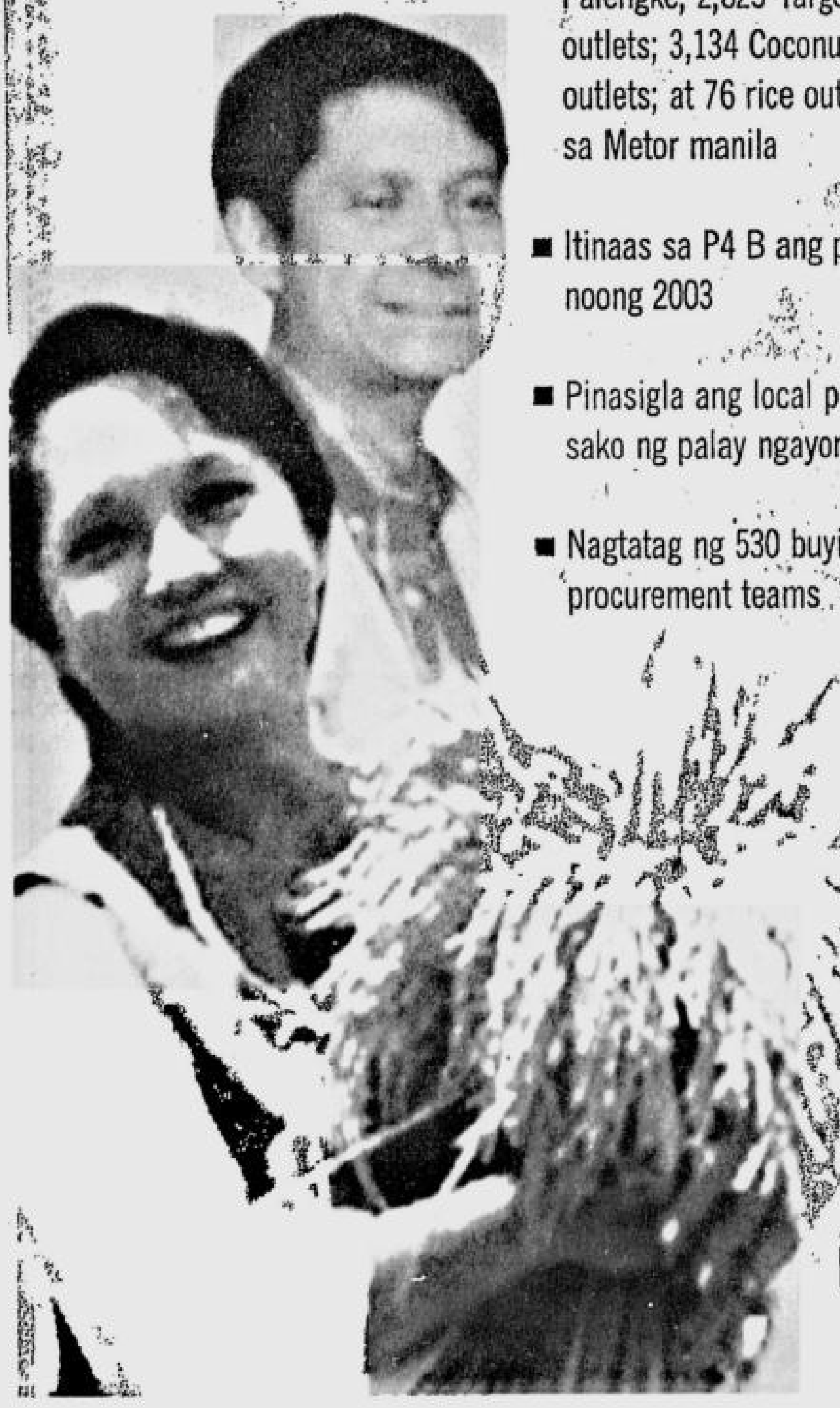

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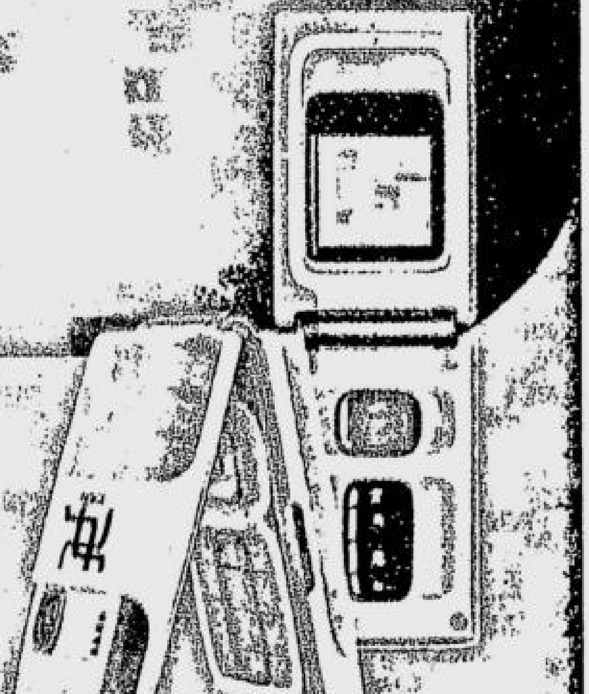

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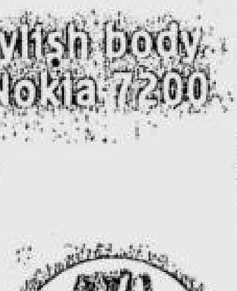
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Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Suspects in Madrid blasts blow selves up

LEGANES, Spain—Three suspects wanted for the Madrid train bombings set off a bomb when cornered in a flat, killing themselves and a policeman, as Spain's search for the perpetrators of the attacks went wrong.

Spanish news agency Europa Press, quoting security force sources, said the suspects were among six men for whom Spain issued arrest warrants on March 31 in connection with the March 11 attacks on Madrid commuter trains that killed 191 people.

Police swooped on the working-class Madrid suburb of Leganes on Saturday evening in an attempt to round up several suspects.

The operation turned ugly when the occupants of the first-floor flat, said by neighbors to be Moroccans in their 20s, spotted the police and began firing while shouting and chanting in Arabic, officials and local residents said.

The police were about to raid the flat when the suspects set off an explosion, demolishing the front of the five-story apartment block.

"There are three bodies of suspected terrorists who may have killed themselves," Interior Minister Angel Acebes told a late-night news conference.

A police officer of the elite Special Operations Group was also killed and 11 police were injured, Acebes said.

The powerful blast sent a pall of smoke into the air, left a gaping hole in the front of the block, damaged nearby buildings and left a pile of rubble on the ground.

Police cordoned off the area. Residents of surrounding blocks were evacuated and 30 families had to spend the night at a hotel because they could not return to their damaged homes.

Europa Press said the blast blew the three bodies up to 30 meters from the living room of the apartment, and police were checking the building's swimming pool for a possible fourth suspect's body.

"This is a very quiet neighborhood. There's no conflict here. But it's places like these where these people try to hide," said local resident Juan Manuel Velez.

Spain is holding 15 people, many of them Moroccan, over the March 11 attacks.

Acebes has singled out the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group—a shadowy organization believed to be tied to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network—as prime suspect in the bombings.

He said one suspect in the flat may have escaped before the police cordoned off the area but he could not be sure.

Acebes said earlier on Saturday a bomb found on a high-speed rail track on Friday contained the same make of explosive and may have a similar detonator to the March 11 bombs.

However, officials cautioned that both the explosives and detonators are widely used in mining.

Europa Press said police also found unused detonators in the ruins of the Leganes apartment.

Investigators believe extremists planned to derail a high-speed train in an attack that might have killed hundreds.

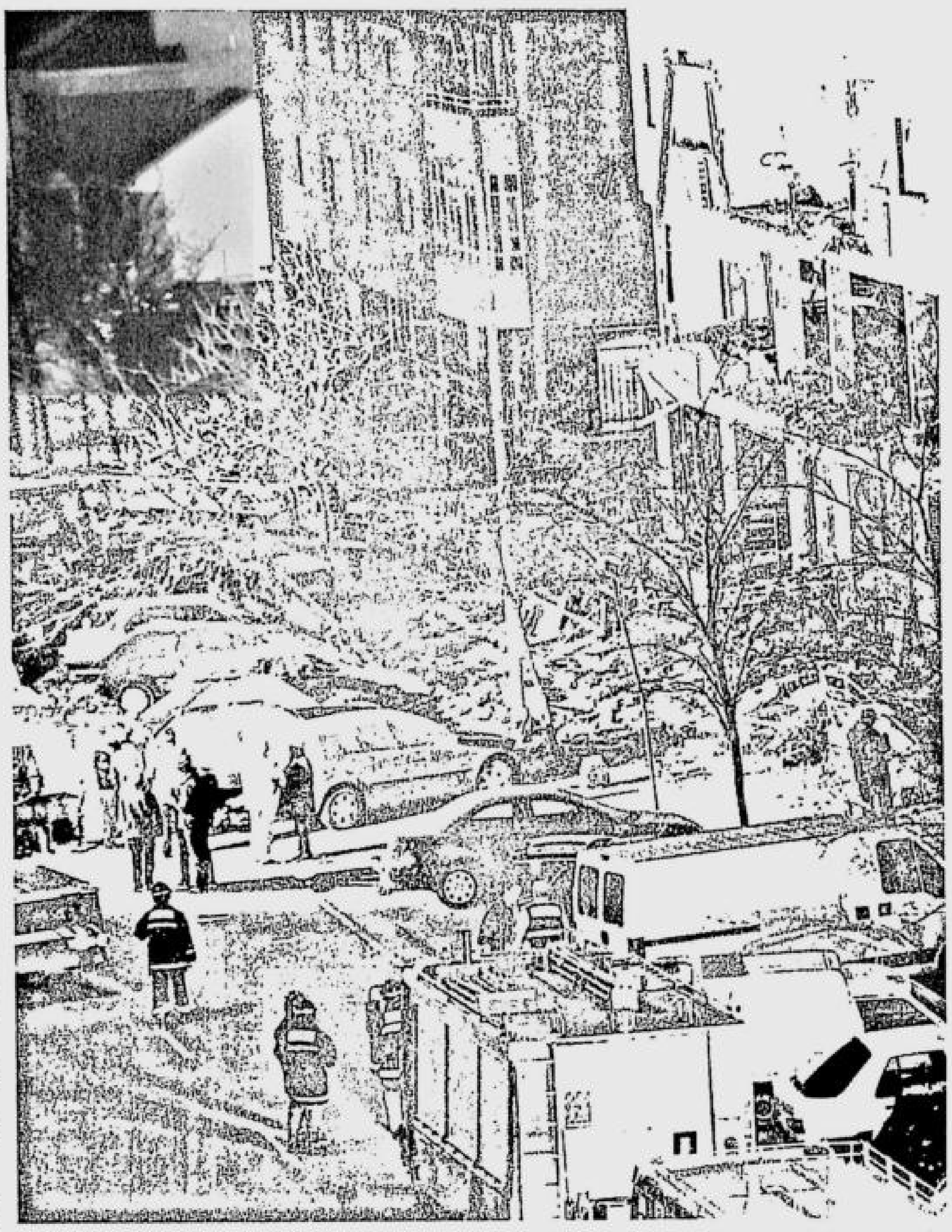
The government refused to blame any group for Friday's thwarted bomb.

High-speed trains from Madrid to the southern city of Seville began running again on Saturday after the 12-kg bomb was defused.

Police and Army backed by helicopters and armored vehicles, were guarding the line but passengers were nervous.

"It always affects you. You can't be calm. Everything seems fairly under control ... but there could have been another March 11 yesterday," said 40-year-old chemist Jose Antonio Perez.

Trains that would normally have been packed with travelers leaving town for the Holy Week holiday had lots of empty seats. *Reuters*



SPANISH police and rescue workers inspecting the scene of the explosion in a Madrid suburb April 3. REUTERS

Chirac visits top secret Russian space center

KRASNOZNAMENSK, Russia—French President Jacques Chirac Saturday became the first Western leader to see a top secret Russian space center as he made a flying visit to Russia in a bid to soothe tense ties between Moscow and the expanding EU and Nato.

Chirac went straight from the airport to the German Titov military space center in Krasnoznamensk, some 45 km outside Moscow, and was greeted by his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov.

He was the first Western head of state to visit the closed Soviet-era facility, which collects and analyses information gathered from nearly all Russian military spy satellites and is run by Russia's Space Forces.

"I want to welcome our honored guest, the president of France. We will now see what this center actually is," Putin said with a hint of pride in his voice as he took Chirac into the control hall.

Behind a glass-shielded balcony, opposite huge screens and digital displays above two rows of technicians in military uniform and foreign journalists allowed for the first time into the secret site, the two leaders listened to Russia's space capabilities including the center's early warning system for missile attacks.

Russian daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta said the aim of the unprecedented invitation was to promote a European anti-missile defense shield built on Russian technology which Moscow is urging as an alternative to a US-led missile defense project.

Paris and Moscow currently enjoy good relations, particularly in the fields of security cooperation and Russian-European space partnership, with France being a leading force in the European space project, diplomats say.

At a press conference after some two hours of talks, Putin said the French leader's visit to the secret military facility proved the "transparency and openness" of Russia's approach to national security, which was not directed against any other country.

Chirac for his part stressed the "historic ties" between France and Russia and the vital need to keep a good relationship between the European Union and its giant and strategically important neighbor Russia.

"France views the relations between the European Union and Russia as an essential element, essential for Russia, essential for Europe and even more importantly, essential for the balance and stability of tomorrow's world," he said. *AFP*

Texas mom who crushed sons' heads acquitted

TYLER, Texas—A woman who claimed God ordered her to bash in the heads of her sons was acquitted of all charges by reason of insanity after a jury determined she did not know right from wrong during the killings.

A jury found on Saturday that Deanna Laney was legally insane May 9 when she killed her two older sons, ages 6 and 8, in the front yard and left the youngest, now 2, maimed in his crib. Laney, 39, would have received an automatic sentence of life in prison had she been convicted of murder.

Laney broke into tears as the verdict was read. Her husband, Keith Laney, sat solemnly with his head down. A few jurors cried and struggled to maintain their composure.

State law allows Laney to be committed to a maximum security state hospital. Medical evaluations will dictate when she will be released. She will remain at the Smith County Jail until a hearing regarding her transfer.

Defense attorney Tonda Curry said the verdict doesn't mean Laney escaped punishment.

"Now and for the rest of her life, the punishment and torment that's going on in her own head is more significant and more damaging to her than anything the criminal justice system could have done, other than death," Curry said.

All five mental health experts consulted in the case, including two for the prosecution and one for the judge, concluded that a severe mental illness caused Laney to have psychotic delusions that rendered her incapable of knowing right from wrong during the killings—the standard in Texas for insanity. *AP*

Missing Bach score found in Japan

TOKYO—Part of a lost composition by Johann Sebastian Bach has been found in Japan about 80 years after it went missing, a Japanese music professor said Sunday.

Eight pages of the 1728 composition "Wedding Cantata BWV 216" by the German baroque master were recently found among the possessions of the late Japanese classical pianist Chieko Hara, said Tadashi Isoyama, a professor at the Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo.

The partial score, consisting of the soprano and alto portions of the cantata, was believed to have been copied by Bach's students under his direction at the time he composed the work, Isoyama said.

Composed for the wedding of a daughter of a customs official, the cantata later made its way into the hands of collectors and was last known to have been in possession of the family of German composer Felix Mendelssohn in 1926. *AP*

CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN WASHINGTON

The Washington Monument, left, and the Jefferson Memorial are lit as twilight settles on the nation's capital April 3, as cherry blossoms rest in the foreground. The Cherry Blossom Parade marched down Constitution Avenue earlier in the day as part of the festivities marking the annual blooming of the pink and white blossoms. AP

KUMARATUNGA REUTERS

Sri Lanka president's political gamble reaps dividends

COLOMBO—Sri Lanka's street-smart president has been vindicated for her tough line on the Tamil Tiger rebels, emerging victorious from a running feud with the prime minister and seeing her party regain power.

Though not a candidate herself in Friday's general election, Kumaratunga avenged her party's stinging defeat in 2001 parliamentary polls when she was forced to ask her arch-rival Ranil Wickremesinghe to form a government.

Known as much for her unpredictability as for her charisma, Kumaratunga took a huge political gamble last November when she sacked top ministers and seized the defense ministry, saying Wickremesinghe had compromised security by conceding too much to win peace with the Tigers.

She then maneuvered to form a coalition with the Sinhalese nationalist People's Liberation Front (JVP), a move that gave her the confidence to dissolve parliament and call the snap poll.

The vote was seen as a referendum on how to pursue peace, with an implacable foe of the Tigers since a 1999 rebel suicide bomb attack left her blind in one eye.

A daughter of two prime ministers, Kumaratunga, 58, takes a harder line on the rebels. But despite their bitter history she has vowed to stick to the island's two-year ceasefire and reopen stalled talks to end the 20-year war that killed 64,000 people.

It was she who opened peace negotiations with the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 1994.

But when talks collapsed she reacted ruthlessly, unleashing the Army to capture the Jaffna peninsula, the Tigers' biggest stronghold in their fight for a separate Tamil state in the island's north and east.

The rebels hit back, targeting her in the bomb attack that partially blinded her just before she won a second presidential term in 1999.

But restarting peace talks will be complicated by her tie-up with the hardline JVP, with the two arms of her coalition giving different signals on peace throughout the campaign.

Normally a workhorse campaigner and known for her passionate oratory on the stump, her campaign was remarkably subdued, with security fears keeping her increasingly confined to her Colombo compound—sealed by a ring of roadblocks.

But with both the executive presidency and her party controlling parliament, the scion of Sri Lankan politics has consolidated her power.

A fluent Francophone from her student days in Paris, Kumaratunga comes from the island's most famous family—though its political successes have been tainted by tragedy. *Reuters*

2 US Marines killed in Iraq

IRAQI police drive to the site of an oil trench, the smoke of which was used one year ago to thwart coalition air force bombers, after it was set ablaze again near the southern city of Basra April 4.

REUTERS

BAGHDAD, Iraq—Two US Marines have been killed in Iraq's western Anbar province "as a result of enemy action," the military said in a statement Sunday.

One of the two died Saturday following an unspecified incident, while the other died Sunday after a separate incident also Saturday, the statement said. Both of the troops were assigned to the 1st Marine Division. It provided no other details.

The most populous city in Anbar province, which stretches from Baghdad to the Jordanian border is Fallujah, where four American civilians were killed and their bodies mutilated Wednesday.

In the city of Baqouba, 50 km northeast of Baghdad, on Sunday a bomb exploded in the al-Rasool al-Adham Shiite mosque, damaging part of the building, but causing no casualties, said the mosque's caretaker Haider Yassin.

In central Baghdad on Sunday, hundreds of supporters of radical Shiite Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr rallied in Firdous Square to protest the arrest on Saturday of one his senior aides, Mustafa al-Yaqoubi, in a raid on his house in the city of Najaf.

It was not clear who detained him. US officials could not confirm the arrest and Spanish forces based in the city denied taking action against him.

About 5,000 members of al-Sadr's self-styled militia, the al-Mahdi Army, paraded in Sadr City, a mainly Shiite district in eastern Baghdad, on Saturday. The cleric has been an outspoken critic of the US-led occupation, but has not called for attacks on the occupying forces.

Al-Sadr's weekly newspaper was shut by US officials on March 28, provoking an enormous anti-American outpouring.

On Saturday, gunmen shot and killed the police chief of Mahmoudiya town, 30 km south of Baghdad, and his driver while they were driving home from the capital.

Not long afterward, six attackers shot at a four-man police patrol in Mahmoudiya, killing one and wounding three, police officer Khaldoon al-Gurairi said. A 60-year-old bystander was also killed.

Guerrillas often target police because they view them as collaborators with the US-led occupation. Also they make easier targets because they are less well-armed and protected than the US troops. *AP*

Arafat 'a more serious obstacle' than slain Yassin—Israel minister

JERUSALEM—Health Minister Danny Naveh kept up the Israeli government's campaign of intimidation against Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Sunday by declaring him a "more serious obstacle" than the assassinated Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

"Yasser Arafat and his gang of terrorists who came from Tunis (their base before their 1994 return to the Palestinian territories) represent a more serious obstacle than Hamas and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin," said Naveh.

The minister, who is a member of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's right-wing Likud party, also made a new call for Arafat's expulsion from his headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah where the 74-year-old has been effectively confined to house arrest for more than two years.

"His expulsion is important, for he continues to transfer funds to the terror organizations and encourages attacks by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades," he said in reference to a radical offshoot of Arafat's Fatah movement.

In an interview with the Haaretz daily on Friday, Sharon hinted that both Arafat and the head of the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, might be in Israel's sights.

"I wouldn't suggest either of them (Arafat and Nasrallah) feels immune.... Anyone who kills a Jew or harms an Israeli citizen, or sends people to kill Jews, is a marked man, period," he said in one of his most threatening remarks to date.

The debate about the fate of Arafat has come back into the spotlight after the wheelchair-bound Yassin was assassinated in an Israeli air strike nearly two weeks ago in Gaza City.

Arafat told journalists on Saturday that he "didn't care" about Sharon's comments, immediately condemned by the United States.

But Naveh told army radio that the threat would "make Arafat understand that he has no immunity."

"To my understanding, there has been no concrete decision to expel Arafat but we must show our resolve," he said.

The Israeli security cabinet approved the principle of Arafat's "removal" in September last year after two suicide attacks which left 15 Israelis dead as well as the Palestinian bombers. *AFP*

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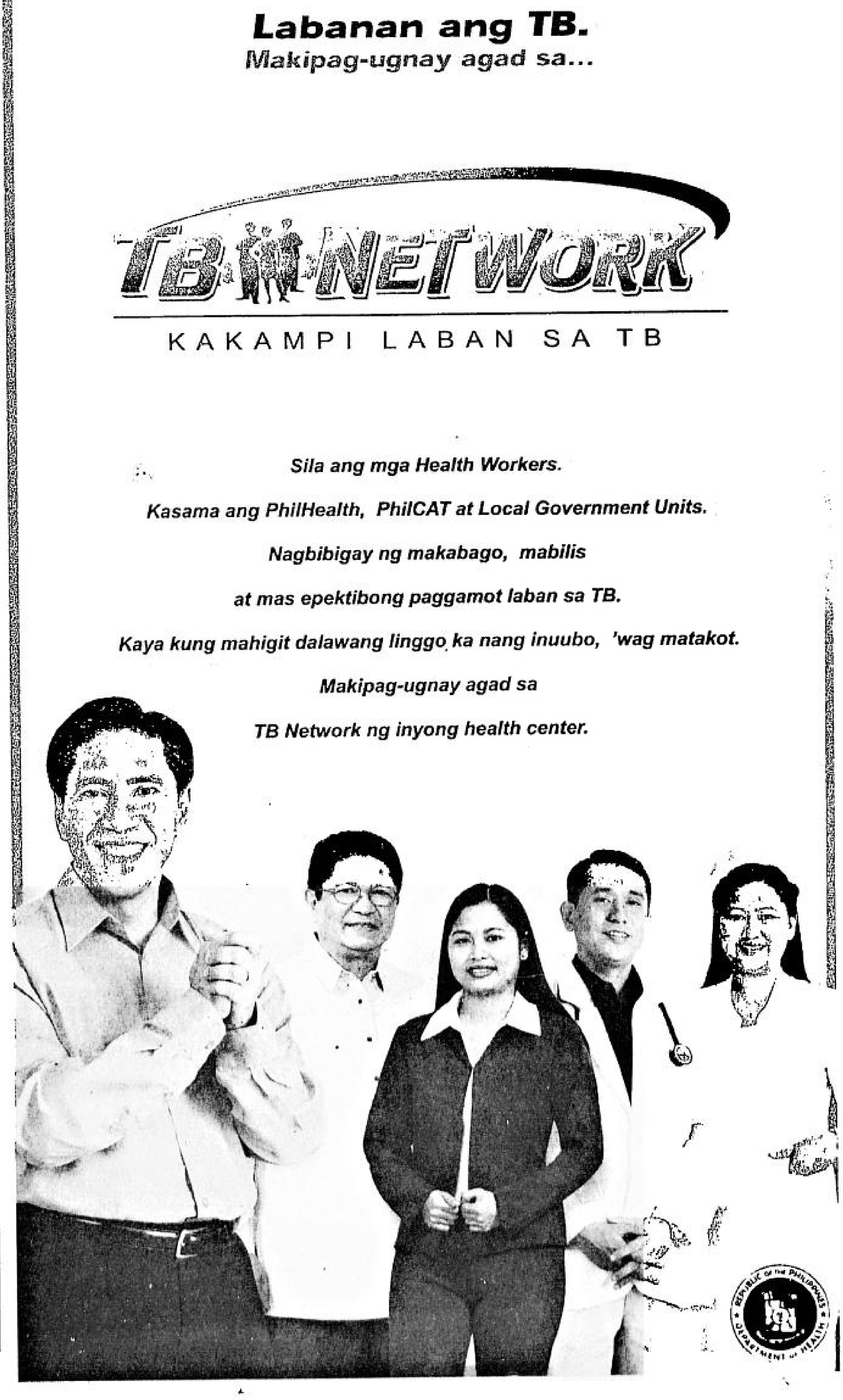

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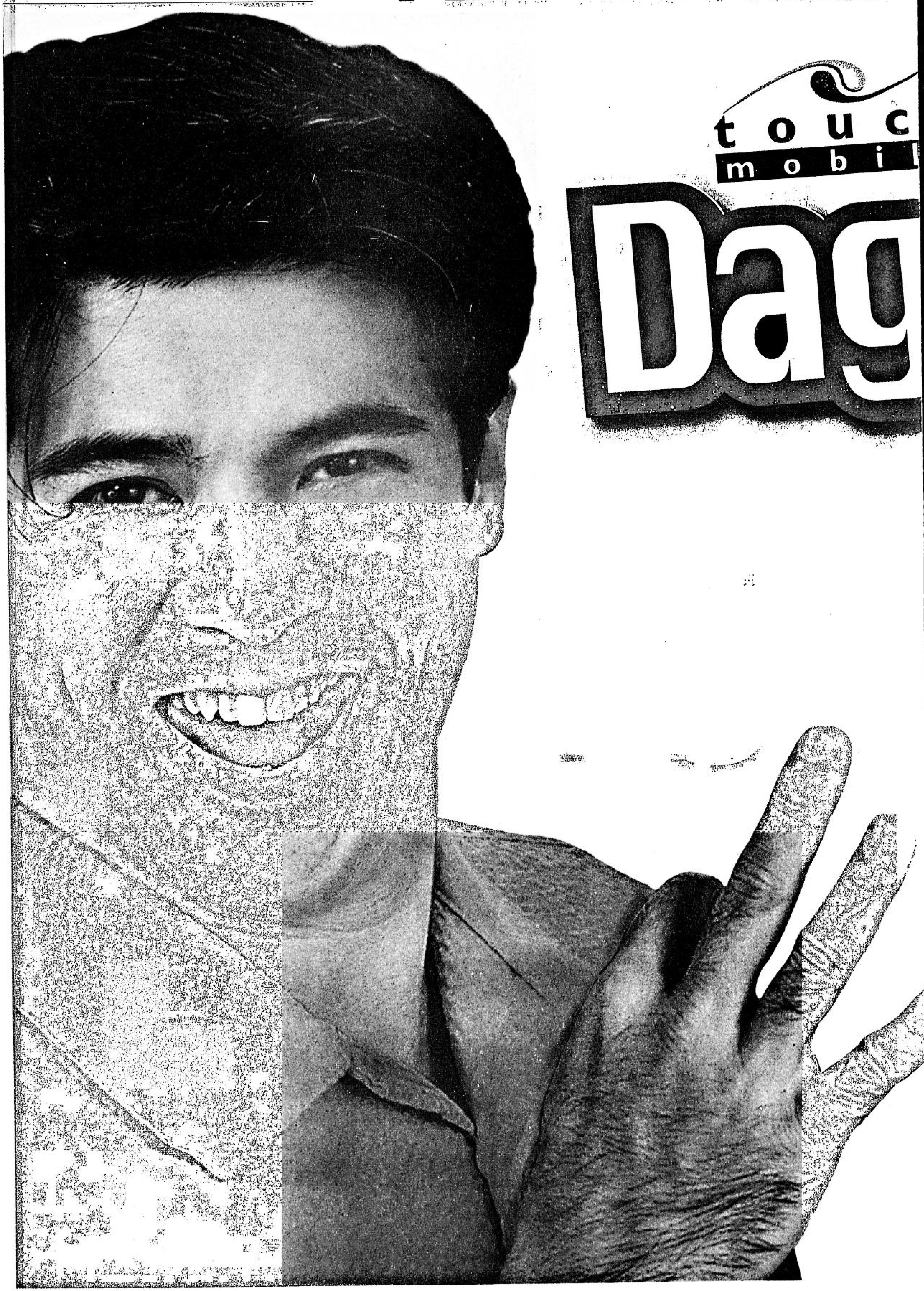
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Mel Gibson's Passion

EDITORIAL

AFTER ALL the hype, what will likely strike the Filipino moviegoer watching "The Passion of the Christ" is how familiar it all is. The violence is unrelievedly graphic, but it is the violence of the *panata*; it calls to mind the self-flagellation of the many devout Filipinos who follow extreme vows during Lent.

We've seen it all before; maybe not in as vivid a fashion, and maybe not for as long as two unrelenting hours. But this is the kind of Christianity the larger culture grew on: our crosses and crucifixes are not empty, and our statuaries of Jesus have coagulated blood where his wounds are supposed to be.

Much has been made, especially in American and European media, of the film's allegedly anti-Semitic bias. No such thing. The movie is not anti-Jewish in any significant sense.

The movie's many defenders have pointed out that the script merely follows the so-called passion narrative in the four Gospels. Strictly speaking, this isn't true. The movie includes or highlights scenes that balance the murderous zealousness of the high priest with the concern of the Jews who follow the Law but are appalled at the grotesque turn the events have taken.

For instance, the Sanhedrin, a Jewish court, subjects Jesus to a loud and peremptory trial. (When he first appears, his bloodied right eye is almost shut; for Jesus, as for many alleged suspects paraded during police lineups, punishment preceded judgment.) But several Jewish leaders vigorously protest the trial, during the trial itself and after. During the scourging, and while Jesus is carrying the cross on the way to Golgotha, many Jews are overcome with grief and shame.

It is true that the infamous mob screaming before Pontius Pilate—calling for Jesus' blood, then for Barabbas' freedom, then again for Jesus' death—is vividly reenacted. It is hard to improve on the actual Gospel passages. But the scene has been shown in other movies before. And no Christian watches that scene without knowing that—in the economy of salvation—he too is part of the crowd. (Peter's betrayal is too much a part of the preceding scenes.)

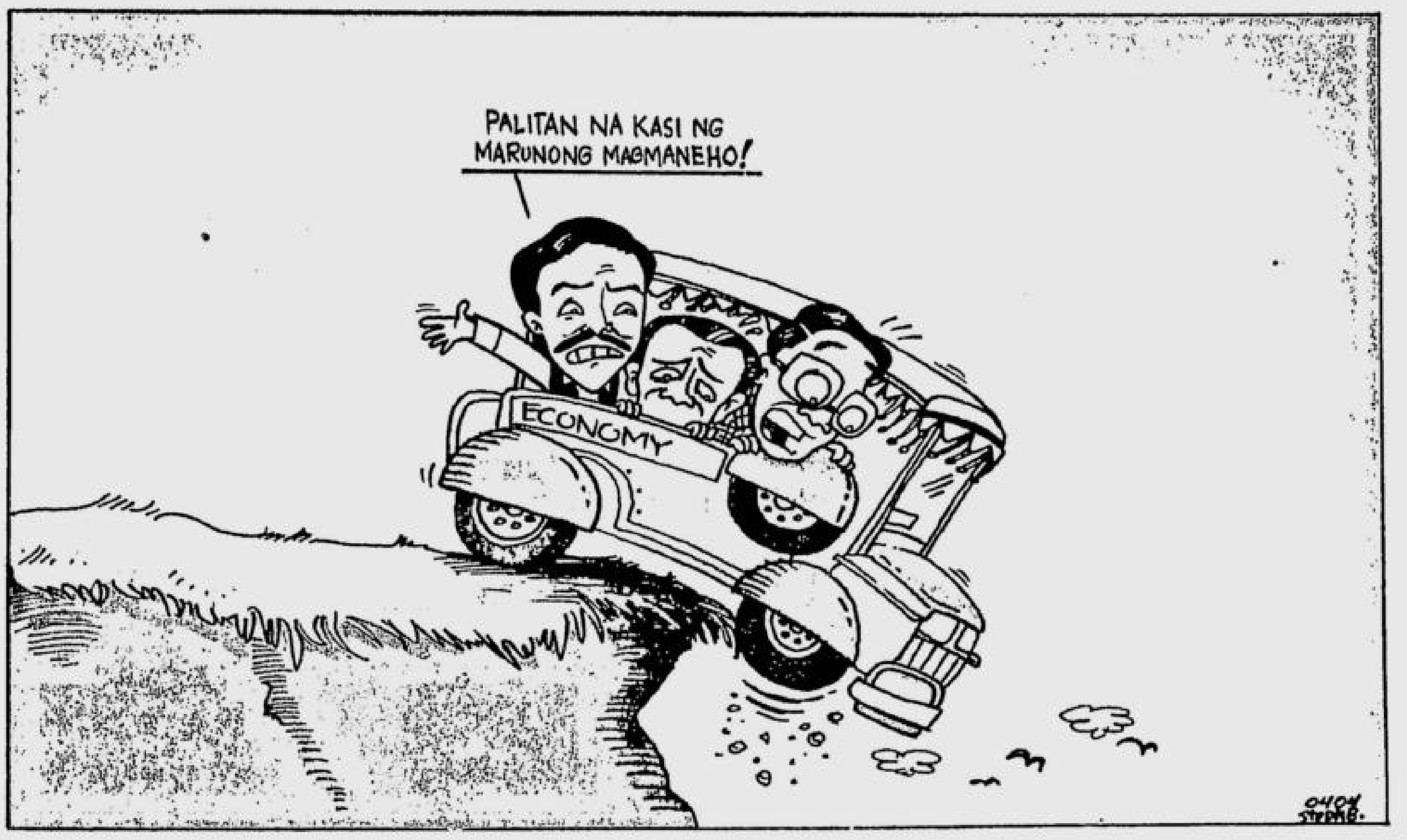
If there is a group that is portrayed in less than round terms, it is the Roman centurions, who quicken when they see blood and become even more brutal when they sense weakness. They are nothing like Pilate, who in spite of a clairvoyant wife and a highly refined sense of right and wrong, still manages to do the wrong thing. The centurions are exactly the stuff empires are built with: hard and pitiless as stone.

In the end, and like each of the Gospels, "The Passion of the Christ" is one man's faith story. (Gibson even imagines an androgynous devil, slithering through the story.) It is a re-telling of the news through one man's experience of faith. (We hesitated to use "good news," because the movie narrates the most difficult hours in the life of Jesus, from the Agony in the Garden to his death on the cross. There is a glimpse of the Resurrection at the end, but only a glimpse.)

The wonder is that Gibson has squeezed new wine out of old wineskins.

He made a difficult but entirely successful decision to use only Aramaic and Latin in the movie. (Even the subtitles were allowed only grudgingly.) He mainly cast actors who were new; even Jim Caviezel, the American actor who portrays Jesus, has an unfamiliar yet recognizable quality to his face. We see him, and we wonder: Now where did I see that man before? (A not-unhappy question, when we gaze on the man who plays Jesus.) Gibson spent millions of dollars to make sure that every cobblestone, every beam and nail, rang true.

But it is Gibson's faith that gives heft and shape to the movie. The story of Christ's passion is one of the oldest stories continuously being retold, but Gibson retells it with the confidence of someone born in the faith and with the fervor of the convert. The result is a movie for our time: In an age when violence on screen has become both expected and pointless, he has given us a movie where the violence is central and redemptive.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Holy Week heaven in the city

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE ANNUAL trek started before the weekend. The early birds wanted to beat the others to the highways (which they knew would soon be crowded) and to the tourist spots (which would soon be less relaxing and, in fact, stressful when the others get there). The mad scramble to the provinces and to distant shores will reach its peak on Wednesday when the bus stations, piers and airports would be overcrowded with people wanting to escape the heat, congestion and pollution of the city. This is the annual Holy Week migration of Filipinos, as predictable as the mad migration of the lemmings or the wildebeests in the African savannahs.

It is not known what instinct drives the lemmings to go on their journey, even swimming into the sea where they drown, but the wildebeests migrate for the succulent new grass growing in the savannahs after the annual rains. The red crabs of Christmas Island and the birds, butterflies and turtles migrate to lay their eggs, and the salmons to spawn in the streams where they themselves were born, and thus ensure the survival of their species.

The Filipinos also "migrate" to the places of their birth, to the rustic barrios and towns with the shady trees, fresh air, clean streams, the green fields and farm animals; to a relaxed lifestyle that they pine for through every day and night of work and suffering in the cities. They get that chance three times a year: during Holy Week, All Saints' Day and Christmas when there are long vacations that allow them to leave their places of work for several days.

But like the animals that have to survive predators waiting in ambush in the long migration routes, the migrating Filipinos have first to survive the crowded highways.

Aaah, to lie under a mango tree feeling the cool breeze caress you, or to lie on the beach lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves, or to swim in cool streams with a waterfall in the background—who wouldn't want to be back there during Holy Week? But like the migrating animals, what travails one has to go through before getting to the Promised Land!

As you drive along provincial highways thinking of the restful days ahead, you begin to slow down to a crawl as traffic piles up. What is this, you ask yourself. This is not Edsa. This is a provincial highway where there is supposed to be plenty of wide open space and plenty of fresh air and green plants. Edsa is what we are escaping from. So what are all these vehicles doing here, spewing smoke all over the place, obstructing the view, and blocking us from getting to the cool climes for our Holy Week vacation?

Well, the reason is that Edsa—and Commonwealth, Rizal and Taft avenues and all the other busy streets of Metro Manila—have been transplanted to the provincial highways. Every second or third guy in the cities has the same idea as you—to escape to the cool countryside for Holy Week. And so here they all are, gathered together at the same time, at the same place, headed for the same destinations, crawling at the same slow pace, suffering in the same heat, breathing the same polluted exhausts.

Pretty soon, the engine overheats, the air conditioning conks out, and the children at the back seat begin to quarrel and cry.

"Stop that!" you snap at them. "Be quiet!"

"But it's so hot," the little boy begins to cry.

"When are we going to reach Lola's farm?" the older girl asks. "We have been here for half a day now."

"Hush," says the wife, wiping the sweat from her face, "we'll be there as soon as we pass this traffic jam."

But there is no passing the traffic jam. It stretches the whole length of the highway. On the shoulders of the highways, boys on the backs of their slow-moving carabaos smile as they pass the long line of expensive mechanical contraptions from the cities. The streams gurgling on the sides of the roads, and the rivers flowing under the bridges seem so cool and inviting but of course you can't leave your vehicle to plunge into them. You are prisoners in your own vehicle.

To make a long story (and the agony) short, your family finally reaches the old hometown or the resort or whatever place you were escaping to. At the resort, you find all the rooms taken. "You should have reserved months ago," says the front desk.

So you go room-hunting and finally find one in a dilapidated pension for the price of a five-star hotel room. But never mind, it is walking distance to the beach. So as soon as you've checked in and changed clothes, you run to the beach.

When you get there, the children stop, puzzled. "Where's the beach?" the boy asks.

"Where's the sea?" the girl asks.

"Well, er," you stammer, "they're somewhere there beyond those people."

"I don't see any beach or sea, only people," says the girl. "Weren't we trying to get away from people?"

"Yes, dear," says the wife, "but they were here first."

"We shouldn't have left home," the boy starts crying again. "I want to go home."

Well, you go home at the first opportunity, but you encounter the same traffic on the highways on the way home. Everybody has the same idea; everybody is scrambling to get back home to rest from their vacations.

Meanwhile, those who don't leave the city will have a very restful Holy Week. For the first time in months, there will be little traffic in the streets. In fact, the streets will be practically deserted on Good Friday. You can zoom from Quezon City to Makati in 20 minutes, a trip that usually takes you two hours on ordinary days.

Aaah, what bliss!

Foul

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

VICENTE Sotto, Fernando Poe Jr.'s campaign manager, says the incident was a "comedy." And Francis Escudero says it was a mere "misunderstanding." That misunderstanding was FPJ berating Sandra Aguinaldo in public. No, not just in public but right on stage, in plain view of everyone.

Well, it is a comedy only in the sense that ABS-CBN's axed "Home Along the Airport," and no one saw Dolphy laughing. Although the fellow found enough material in it to turn the tables on his perceived tormentor, GMA. "*Dugay na sa* Malacañang, *tonto pa gihapon* (She's long in Malacañang but still naïve)," he told his audience in Cebu, who roared in approval. I don't know that Sandra shouldn't say the same thing. "*Dugay na sa publiko, pikon pa gihapon* (He's long in the public eye but still testy)."

And it is a misunderstanding only in the sense that the voters may misunderstand that FPJ is actually running for president. They may misunderstand his true intentions and start believing that, like Dolphy, he is only joking. Now that will be a comedy where a lot of people will laugh. At least they will be hugely entertained.

I saw a footage of the incident on TV, and my heart went out to Sandra. I saw FPJ walk over to her, who was behind him with her crew on the stage, and say in a very audible voice, "*Ikaw na kaya ang magsalita.*" And tried to give her the microphone. I saw Sandra pull back in surprise, her face breaking into a smile and then turning red as she realized it wasn't a joke. It was a brief instant, but I can imagine how it must have been an eternity for her. That kind of thing burns and won't let go till well after the incident. It was a public humiliation, and to call it a comedy is to add insult to injury.

I am particularly sensitive about this not just because I am in media, too but because I have a daughter who is in the same line of work as Sandra. I know her friends in her station, and I like all of them. They are tremendously enterprising, waking up at crack of dawn to run after stories. It's a competitive business, and editorial bosses have been known to chew out reporters who got scooped by rival networks. I know they can often be aggressive and pushy and storm their way past barriers, but that is what they are there for. I have only taken care to advise the kids not to storm their way past decorum. I draw the line at intruding on grief: I am dismayed by TV reporters who thrust microphones in the faces of grieving widows demanding to know how they feel. I have no problems with them thrusting microphones in other faces, not least those of presidential aspirants in presidential sorties.

Sandra Aguinaldo did not deserve what she got. The kiss-and-make up that took place afterward doesn't kiss it away or make up for it. What can a TV reporter do but kiss and make up? Covering people like FPJ is their job, their livelihood depends on it. FPJ's subsequent effort to appease Sandra no more justifies what he did than GMA's effort to appease Tina Panganiban-Perez after berating her for interviewing Gregorio Honasan after the Oakwood mutiny justifies what she did. While at this, what an asinine suggestion, the one Tito Sotto and Loren Legarda made, for Sandra to apologize to FPJ. It is FPJ who should walk on his knees to beg Sandra's forgiveness. Why should Sandra apologize for doing her work? FPJ should apologize for not doing his, which is to act not as a *panday* but as a presidential aspirant. But I insult smiths.

It was bound to happen some time. I had been saying it all along when I was trying to convince FPJ not to run out of his own volition. It wasn't just a matter of him thinking about the nation, it was a matter of him thinking about himself. He had nothing to gain and everything to lose. I did warn him that the mainstream media won't be as kind to him, or as docile, as the show-biz one. Thus far, he has gotten away with conscripting "movie scribes" to sing his praises, and with—if Franklin Cabaluna is to be believed—threatening with mayhem those who do not. He won't be able to do the same thing with the mainstream media. I don't doubt mainstream media can also be persuaded to see things in a new light with carrot and stick, with blandishment and threat, but there are enough people left in them that remain enterprising. Or that do not get intimidated so easily.

Sandra Aguinaldo is just the beginning and by no means the severest test FPJ will get from media. He wants to be president, he will have to deal with reporters who will not be content to hang around like part of the retinue and wait to be thrown scraps of information. They will push and shove to get it, the competition between the newspapers and the networks—we do have a free press—assuring it. FPJ wants to be president, he will have to deal with reporters who will dig up every detail of his personal life—you are president, your life and loves will not remain personal—and bring them to light of day. Some will be judicious, others will not—media have their excesses, as the public knows only too well—but you want power, you pay its price.

So far FPJ has managed to keep his private life private. No one really knows much about him other than the persona he has essayed in the movies. None of that will remain so. The man behind the persona will be extracted, pinned with a needle, and put under the microscope. You take on a public life, as Jesus Christ was prepared to do, you have to be prepared to be nailed to the Cross. And these days, no one hammers a nail more furiously than an able reporter.

If FPJ becomes president, he can't always tell a reporter, "*Ikaw na lang kaya mag presidente.*" She just might take him up on it.

And do a far, far better job.

GMA's 'campaign manager'

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has apologized for the tragic death of a 5-year-old child caught in the crossfire between government troops and suspected kidnappers. Taking full responsibility for it, she ordered the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force and the PNP to review their rules of engagement to prevent a repetition of the tragedy. Such review is timely, as sometimes the law enforcers may become very careless and innocent civilians get hurt; but it must be noted that crossfire incidents are bound to happen in the heat of any war.

* * *

KNP candidate Fernando Poe Jr. and Channel 7 reporter Sandra Aguinaldo agreed to "forget everything" two days after the Iloilo episode where FPJ berated her before TV cameras for having distracted the attention of the rally audience away from him. But unfortunately for FPJ this was not a "comedy," as his major handler, Sen. Vicente Sotto, would make it appear. To the minds of many thinking citizens, the episode may indicate serious implications.

* * *

K-4 senatorial candidate Orlando Mercado, a media man-turned-politician, opined that it shows the "self-centered style of governance" of the action star in his craving to be "*laging bida,*" whereas governance involves consensus building. Then too, Mercado raised the question of whether FPJ can do his job under pressure. I agree: if a fleeting intrusion into his speech by a reporter can make him flare up like that, how can he withstand the horrible pressures of the presidency? But aside from indicating FPJ's now legendary short fuse, it also shows his very short attention span—he couldn't go back to what he was saying after Sandra distracted him.

But reelectionist Makati Rep. Teddy Boy Locsin offered the best advice, which could apply to all public figures. He advised FPJ, under whose banner he is running, to welcome the media and "be happy they are around," as worse is the fate of the candidate who's not covered by media.

* * *

My Japanese son-in-law, Keiichi Miki, who heads a big investment firm in Tokyo, was present at the dinner the President held with the top business executives of Japan during her first state visit there in September 2001, and he was quite impressed with her. On a brief visit to Manila with our daughter Christine, he watched GMA on Max Soliven's ANC talk show, "Impact." He was impressed with her command of the presidency, but he also found GMA a bit too uptight; he told me that if I should run into her, perhaps I could remind her to "loosen up a bit."

I surmised to him that one reason for GMA's uptightness that week could be that she was being hit left and right with charges by all her opponents. I also suspect that what added to her tension was the fact that, as I learned from ABS-CBN insiders, her appearance on "Impact" was live, whereas those of her rivals, FPJ and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, were pre-taped. Hence, they could ask for some "editing," whereas GMA didn't have that luxury in this most cruel medium.

* * *

At a recent social gathering I got the chance to offer Keiichi's unsolicited advice to GMA and she seemed amused. Then I pursued the latest political developments, such as the Marañon brothers' abandoning her camp and jumping to FPJ's. GMA replied, "I leave those details to my political strategists and I just do my best. I have no time to be "introspective." She didn't say so explicitly, but one could sense that even as she confesses to doing her utmost, she views becoming President with a certain degree of fatalism, which could be the wellspring of her serenity toward her task. This came across in her remark, "While I try to do my best, I also feel that if God wants me to win, He'll work it out so that I win. I let God be my campaign manager."

* * *

Supreme Court administrator Presbitero J. Velasco Jr. wrote to dispute my assertion that the golf tournament he organized for Supreme Court justices and lawyers from several leading Makati firms, including that of Villaraza, Angangco, puts into question his sense of judgment, making him rather unfit for the highest tribunal. I had also stated that when Chief Justice Hilario Davide heard of that fund-raising plan, he asked that it be scuttled.

Velasco asserted that he did not organize any golf tournament for the high magistrates and the Makati lawyers, but that it was a project of the Philippine Judges Foundation Inc. and that Davide did not have it scuttled. My sources, however, who are leading law practitioners, insist they read about the fund-raising tournament involving Velasco in the INQUIRER itself, which reported that Davide had objected to it and wanted it aborted. I am having this item researched in the INQUIRER files and will report on it.

* * *

I watched K-4 senatorial candidate Mar Roxas in a TV forum recently where he stressed that his goal once in the Senate is to work for legislation that could rev up local businesses. We have about 850,000 business entities, he said, and if each of them could be stimulated so that each of them could hire even just one more person, that's 850,000 jobs more. I saw for myself how Roxas, as trade secretary, assiduously shepherded the electronics and information industries, such as the call center and medical transcription businesses, into healthy growth. With him in the Senate we can be sure he'd bring these sunrise industries into full fruition. The way Roxas is going up and up in the surveys, I wouldn't be surprised if he lands among the top three contenders. If that happens then he will definitely be among the serious contenders for 2010.

'Academizing' Mindanao peace

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

AT LEAST one presidential candidate, Raul Roco, has articulated the need to allow people in Mindanao to steer the island through the peace process. Every presidential administration makes a hype of the peace process that always, without exception, ends up being managed mostly by Manilans. And Manila being continuously ignorant *intawon*, even to this day, of Mindanao, what else can we expect?

But another facet of the peace process—not in the mind of Manila policymakers—is the intensifying grass-roots peace efforts. Along this direction, 26 young high school and college students from Mindanao, left early this week for DeKalb, Illinois for a one-month study-orientation program.

Education in Mindanao in recent years has helped shape the discourse on Mindanao peace and development. So what can be more apt than an international dialogue and exposure program within the context of ethnic and religious diversity being initiated by northern Mindanao's emerging leader in culture education, Capitol University. The institution is Mindanao's youngest university, which is only about a year old.

However, it has been actually on the education front since 1971 when it was founded by philanthropist-educator Laureana San Pedro Rosales of Bataan to do education work in an Islamic school in Marawi City. Since founding the fledgling Cagayan Capitol College, the school has grown by amazing leaps and bounds and was able to acquire its university status two years after application, a record time. Today, Capitol University is the Mindanao conduit of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, the official training venue in Mindanao of the Philippine Madrigals, and, if plans push through inshaallah, will soon be the home of a Mindanao Cultural Studies program.

The 26 students are the primary focus of a program being jointly undertaken by the university and Northern Illinois University's Center for Southeast Asian Studies, one of only eight national resource centers in the United States for such studies. The partnership will introduce young Moro and non-Moro Mindanao youth to the broad aspects of civil society in the United States and to the more specific aspects of experience of ethnic and religious diversity in Southeast Asia, the point being that interethnic cooperation is a key to the solution of the Mindanao problem. The program hopes to form the core of a new generation of youth leaders and activists who will contribute toward grass-roots peace initiatives in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

The program will analyze methods of conflict resolution, especially as these are applied to inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts.

The follow-on program will operate some three months after the students' return to Mindanao and it will call for the production of educational materials relevant to grass-roots peace initiatives. It will also consist of extensive "where do we go from here" priorities planning based on actual community realities. Serving as in-country coordinator for CU is Maranao scholar Dr. Nagasura Madale who is not new to Mindanao peace studies in the academe.

Last April 1, all 26 students arrived on American soil, bringing with them a variety of Mindanao cultural orientations. In the group are six Mạranaos, three Maguindanaons, one Tausug, one Sama-Tausug, one Talaandig, six Chavacanos, and seven of the Ilonggo and Cebuano migrant roots. The youngest is 15 years old.

Of the 26 students, 13 are Muslims, the rest Christians and animists. There are 16 females and 10 males, their educational attainment ranging from third year high school to first year college.

CU's pioneering program is expected to contribute to the Mindanao peace process. Usually, peace initiatives focus on the political rather than the cultural, on the bigwigs rather than the ordinary *masa*. This is where the program hopes to create a difference. That a relatively young institution, Capitol University, is leading the way is another bright spot for the cause of Mindanao peace, to which academic cultural leadership can be very valuable.

* * *

Last month, a war memoir, "War in My Eyes," was launched, hoping to contribute to the continuing efforts to write the Filipino historiography of World War II, that part of our history whose eyewitnesses are steadily fading into the Great Beyond. The writer, Solomon Pimentel of Cagayan de Oro, was neither a guerrilla nor a soldier when the war broke out in his boyhood home of Malaybalay, Bukidnon. Pimentel's story is unique. It is not the usual cloak and dagger guerrilla account, nor the blood and gore of Kempeitai tortures. Pimentel, then a young boy, was taken hostage with his adoptive family by retreating Japanese soldiers deep into the hinterland forests of the Upper Pulangi River Valley between Bukidnon and Agusan. The harrowing details of that hostage situation, including eyewitness accounts of cannibalism, serve to make us remember not only the heroism of the past but also the utter abhorrence of war as a tool for peace.

* * *

MEA CULPA. Sometime ago, I wrote about Butuan City's latest cultural find, the Bonbon Shell Midden, where, among other finds, part of a human arm bone, which I called "tibia" was found. Immediately I got correction letters from a UST physical anthropologist, and a doctor friend based in New York, saying that the tibia is a leg bone. My article should have referred to the "humerus."

* * *

Comments to monta@sni.ph

She makes things work

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

PRESIDENT Ramos, when he was recruiting young, able people to serve in his administration, said that working in the government is the best education there is. And he was right.

The year I spent working directly for the president armed me with a greater appreciation of the challenges and problems national leaders face. No person, president, or government, is perfect, and it is a fine line between demanding the impossible and living with the unacceptable. The president walks that fine line with skill.

A president is often described as only as good as the people the president appoints. But a president appointees are only as good as the person appointing them. By this I mean that every president assumes office faced with hostility from within, from the bureaucracy. Presidents come and go, but the bureaucracy remains the same. The president can appoint all the best people, but if they do not understand how the government works, nothing will get done. Indeed, the first challenge for a president is to realize that sometimes, you cannot get things done merely with the best people: you must have effective people, people who know how things work and can thus, make things work. However, to be able to make these choices requires a president who understands not only how things work, but how to make even the unworkable at least manageable. It is the first test of leadership for a president to understand these prudent distinctions. Which Catholic saint was it who advised that it is better to have wise, rather than holy, bishops? That is, of course, if you cannot have both, and in an imperfect world, it is difficult to have both.

Since the foundation of the modern presidency, our presidents have had to combine being the conductor of national governance with being the chief traffic cop and conflict resolver in the government. Everyone looks to the president for answers. The ability of a president to provide those answers separates bad from good executives.

In recent months I have had several opportunities to talk to students and they invariably ask me why I intend to vote for the President. My answer is invariably long, because it is only by understanding how the President governs that one's vote for her becomes logical. And so I explain to them my experience working for her.

The first thing that took place was the drafting and approval of a memorandum that outlined the duties of my office. The next step was to inform the bureaucracy as a whole, and concerned agencies in particular, of the mandate given by the President, and then to institutionalize the means of communication between those offices and mine. This required initiative, which the President welcomes. In other words, it wasn't enough to request, on bended knee, a general certification of authority, but rather, what was required was to arrive at a program of action with corresponding responsibilities, and ensure that everyone was on board as far as that mandate was concerned.

The third thing, and this is what separates the President, in my experience, from her predecessors, was an insistence on the full documentation of all actions with a corresponding reluctance to rely on oral agreements and personal meetings. People are shocked that in my year of working for the President, I never had a formal meeting with her. What should shock them, I always explain, is the fact that personal meetings were simply not required, since they were irrelevant. Everything was done on paper, clearly laid out, submitted, and personally scrutinized by the President, who then confidently issued the appropriate instructions or comments. This made life smooth and efficient for everyone. The President at all times knew what was being done or what needed to be done; I knew what to pursue or what to set aside for a more propitious time; everyone else in the administration knew what was to be done now, later, or not at all.

To give an idea of the President's personal capacity for hard work and attention to detail, in general, the turnover time from the submission of a memorandum, and a reply with the President's approval or rejection, was three days. In times of national crisis or emergency, the turnover time would extend to seven days or a week. To my mind, this showed that the President was disciplined and dedicated, and more importantly, set clear priorities: it would have been odd and a waste of time and resources, for example, to be attending to lower-level business with the same dispatch during a national emergency.

At no time was there confusion about my duties or area of responsibility; from the moment I was appointed, to the time I resigned, and the transition since to my successor, the President's attention did not flag or fail, nor did the manner in which her officials attended to the implementation of her instructions differ. For things to work at the lower levels, the one at the top has to possess a sure appreciation of her office, its powers, and the subordinate powers and responsibilities of those who work for her and the country. No one else has this grasp. We have faced many crises with the government working remarkably smoothly and efficiently to face terrorism, SARS, water and other shortages. These are signal accomplishments of the President. But what too few see is how she has managed the government well—in the truest sense of being the chief executive of the land. Few presidents have managed the transition from legislator to executive so competently.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Unfair coverage of Villanueva's campaign

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

IN A SHORT campaign period where five candidates are vying for the presidency, every bit of media exposure counts. More so if one of the contenders is the incumbent President who has at her command the vast resources of the government to make herself seen and heard by the electorate.

The four other wannabes have to make do with whatever publicity mileage they can get using their own resources or may be made available to them by media by way of news coverage of their campaign activities.

Last March 30, the INQUIRER carried on its front page the second of two parts of its feature story on the campaign style of presidential candidate Eduardo "Bro. Eddie" Villanueva. The first part was published the day before.

The article was the last of four other essays that were earlier written by the newspaper's desk editors who joined the candidates in their campaign sorties. Colorful photos of the candidates as they stumped around the country soliciting votes accompanied the reports.

The front-page photo of Villanueva in the March 30 issue showed him in a pastel pin stripe long-sleeve shirt and black pants waving his trademark two-finger "V" sign at the crowd. In the background were his supporters who wore yellow T-shirts and the Philippine flag that fluttered in the wind.

The rest of the story about Villanueva's campaign strategy was continued on Page A8. This page had photos of the 30,000-strong crowd that attended Villanueva's rally in Cebu City, his new hair style, the movie personalities who are helping him, and party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo who was his fellow political activist during their younger years.

In sharp contrast to the color pictures that graced the articles on the four other presidential candidates, all these photos were in black and white. The difference caught the sharp eyes of a reader who identified himself as a movie scriptwriter but requested that her identity be kept under wraps.

Discrimination

The reader cried "foul" over what she felt was the INQUIRER's discriminatory treatment of her candidate. She said the newspaper played favorites in coming out with color photos of the other candidates while those of Villanueva's were in "drab black and white."

According to her, the impact of the photo of the big crowd that attended Villanueva's rally in Cebu City would have been stronger had it been presented in full color. A similar effect would have been achieved had the picture of "the beautiful and popular movie personalities who gathered to show their support for him" been done also in color.

Although disappointed by what she felt was the INQUIRER's failure to treat the presidential candidates equally, the reader was appreciative of the newspaper's decision to feature the campaign strategies of the candidates. "The free publicity was worth hundreds of thousands of pesos," she said. She expressed the hope though that the editorial staff would "see the light" in the handling of the news about Villanueva in the future.

When I asked her how Brother Eddie's campaign was going, she replied that with God's guidance, it is well on track and she expressed confidence that the people's warm reception to their candidate's message would translate into votes on May 10.

Dinner meeting

Villanueva is no stranger to the newspaper's staff. Shortly after the start of the official campaign for national positions, he had dinner, upon the invitation of the INQUIRER management, with the editors and executives to discuss his platform.

It was a cordial give-and-take. No holds barred. He willingly answered questions about his religious activities and political plans. In the course of the discussion, he disclosed several attempts by the emissaries of President Macapagal-Arroyo to persuade him to give up his presidential ambitions, but to no avail.

Incidentally, except for actor Fernando Poe Jr., four presidential candidates accepted the INQUIRER's invitation to talk about their respective programs of government.

Businessman Eduardo Gil did not get the opportunity to elaborate on his platform because the order of the Commission on Elections disqualifying him from the presidential race came before the INQUIRER could invite him for dinner.

In Poe's case, his principal media handler made arrangements for him to meet with the editorial staff on a certain time and date. Unfortunately, four hours before the scheduled meeting, the handler called to say that Poe would not be able to make it. The newspaper has not heard from Poe's camp since then about resetting the planned discussion.

The highlight of the editors' tête-à-tête with Villanueva was his praying over the staff to implore Almighty God to continue to bless and guide the INQUIRER in its mission to bring the news to the people. That pastoral gesture drew an appreciative response from the editors.

Technical error

So how come the feature story on Villanueva's campaign activities did not get equal "colorful" treatment as the rest of the presidential candidates? What went wrong in the preparation of the accompanying pictures of the article?

When I checked with the editorial staff, I learned that they have standing orders to have all the pictures of the candidates that will be used in the feature stories on them to be in color. To avoid complaints of discrimination, the sequence of the presentation of the candidates was done alphabetically and the editorial space given to them was, more or less, of a similar size.

The error was traced to the person who handled the technical layout of the page where the rest of Villanueva's photos appeared. For some unexplained reasons, the photos were done in black and white rather than in color, contrary to the earlier instructions of the editorial staff.

No excuses, no alibis, it is clear the newspaper made a mistake in the preparation of the photos in question. Those pictures should have been published in full color splendor like the way it was done with the photos of the other presidential candidates.

The INQUIRER apologizes to Villanueva, his supporters and the readers for the booboo. It regrets whatever discomfort or unease the error may have caused the affected parties.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

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Coco levy politics

LAST March 20, your paper published the article "GMA still counting on Danding." It clearly shows that political interest, in view of the May 10 presidential elections, is indeed a very crucial matter that coconut farmers have to deal with in their struggle to recover the multibillion-peso coconut levy funds and assets.

The Nationalist People's Coalition, which Danding Cojuangco heads, has taken a neutral stand in the coming elections, refraining from endorsing a single candidate for the presidency. Instead, the NPC stalwarts are now seen to have spread themselves in support of several presidential aspirants. It appears that the wily Cojuangco, a.k.a. the Kingmaker, is playing it safe and placing his bets on all the perceived leading candidates. This seems to be the best alternative left to preserving his interests after his attempt to present himself as a potential candidate terribly failed last year due to the raucous and very critical reactions coming from the coconut farmers and coco levy recovery advocates.

The coco levy funds and assets are enough reason for the NPC's political neutrality. In fact, they offer a hundred billion reasons. The Supreme Court in December 2001 had declared the coco levy funds prima facie public funds—held by government in trust for the coconut farmers. The same ruling also ordered the Sandiganbayan to swiftly resolve the civil cases involving the funds and to determine with finality the true ownership of the assets. Notwithstanding that, until today, the Sandiganbayan has ruled on only one of eight civil cases. The ruling, while also favorable to the government and coconut farmers, still successfully is kept at bay by a motion for reconsideration from Cojuangco. Moreover, the Supreme Court itself has still to rule on two pending coco levy-related cases: the Bugsuk Farm and Unicom cases.

This inability of the judiciary to settle with finality the cases on the multi-billion coco levy has put the situation of the poor coconut farmers in dire straits, especially with the coming presidential polls. Could it be that the judiciary is awaiting who the next president will be? I surely hope not. For with Cojuangco's shadow lurking behind both administration and opposition parties, one can expect a number of compromises to be made along the way.

True enough, it will be the courts which shall rule on the fate of the coco levy. However, if kept pending until after the May elections, the next president will still have the option to withdraw or simply forever keep the cases at bay as was attempted by ousted President Estrada. The millions of coconut farmers should primarily put this in mind come May 10.

—JOEY FAUSTINO,
executive director,
Coconut Industry Reform
Movement Inc.,
84 Masikap Extension,
Barangay Central,
Diliman, Quezon City

Sensitivity to human rights

I READ with interest Neal Cruz's column last March 22 on human rights violations by the Bureau of Immigration.

Early this year, the Supreme Court shafted the bureau for harassing another German, Herbert Scheer, who was equally thrashed and abused by that agency. He was arrested arbitrarily in 2002. But, it is only recently that he was vindicated. With a huge open wound in one leg, he suffered immensely in detention and had to be hospitalized until we finally got him out on a petition for habeas corpus. But the bureau did not stop there, claiming that he should be summarily deported for having a slight physical injuries case in Germany! It wasn't true, either (and moral turpitude is not involved in such a common happening).

He came here in the '80s, married one of our women, sired three children and even became a confidential agent of an NBI director. A respected member of the community, he managed a restaurant business and employed a lot of Filipinos. He stepped on powerful toes and was harassed no end even if he faced no charges here or in Germany. His health and business were severely affected from which he has yet to recover.

This time, the Supreme Court cannot be praised enough for vindicating the human rights of "an alien entitled to a permanent stay [who] cannot be deported without being accorded due notice and hearing," which should give us a talking point when our compatriots similarly situated are treated roughly abroad.

The BID should never be headed by a non-lawyer insensitive to constitutional and human rights concerns.

—RAV SAGUISAG,
4045 Bigasan St.,
Palanan, Makati City

The Villavicencio heritage in Taal

WE, the heirs of Eulalio and Gliceria Villavicencio, would like to thank Bea Zobel Jr. for the wonderful write-up featuring the house in Taal, Batangas, titled "Heritage is history with love." (Lifestyle, 3/1/04)

However, we would like to make some corrections. The house was not restored, rather it was renovated: there were some deviations made from its original design.

The house was actually a wedding gift to our grandmother Gliceria from our grandfather Eulalio. It was given in October 1871. It had a simple interior and an architecture in the style of those days, as shown in pictures in our ancestral album.

The house was inherited by their grandchildren—Montserrat Joven, Rodolfo, Rosario Villavicencio and the late Natividad Villavicencio. As Ms Zobel said, heritage is history with love, thus, we the Montserrat, Rosario, the late Natividad and Baby Joven (daughter of Montserrat) decided to renovate the house for future generations to see and remember.

—HEIRS OF EULALIO
AND GLICERIA MARELLA
VILLAVICENCIO

DOF official on Tulfo's allegations

THIS is to rebut Ramon Tulfo's column of March 23 titled "This Guy has connections," in which he alleged that Finance Secretary Juanita (not Julieta, as he misstated) D. Amatong ordered me to halt an investigation into the alleged unpaid tax liabilities of a certain Michael Chua Guy.

Amatong has never ordered me to desist from any investigation. The Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS)—as Tulfo himself pointed out—performs the functions of an internal affairs office within the Department of Finance and its attached agencies, such as the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs. Its subjects of investigation are mainly personnel of these agencies who may be engaged in graft and corruption, and not private citizens. Furthermore, an inquiry into a person's tax liabilities is more properly the responsibility of the BIR which, under the National Internal Revenue Code, is tasked with the enforcement of tax laws.

Finally, the veracity of Tulfo's allegation that Guy visited Amatong at her home on the night of March 20, to unduly influence her, is belied by the fact that the secretary left her home at 5:45 a.m. of that same day on an official trip out of town. As of March 23, she was still on official leave.

—EMMANUEL P. BONOAN,
undersecretary,
Department of Finance,
Roxas Boulevard cor.
Pablo Ocampo Street, Manila

Are there jobs for new graduates?

MARCH is the month when new graduates add to the number of the labor force.

This is likewise the most appropriate time for the 4.22 million jobless Filipinos, the highest number of such so far, to ask the President, "Where are the one million jobs you promised us?"

President Macapagal-Arroyo stated that she was able to produce the one million jobs she promised in her last State of the Nation Address.

While it may be true that she was able to produce more jobs than her predecessor, the continuous decline of the unemployment rate (12.2 percent in 2003) speaks well of how the country cannot boast of jobs for the millions of jobless Filipinos, much less absorb new college graduates yearly.

Another problem that the President failed to address is the underemployment in the country. In 2003, there were 4.73 million (15.6 percent of the total population) underemployed Filipinos. Imagine a doctor who flees from the country to be employed as a caregiver abroad; or a certified public accountant hired as a cashier.

I remember seeing one of my schoolmates, a degree-holder, applying for a job as a service crew person in one of the famous fast-food chains in the country. A recent study made by a magazine showed that the odds of an elementary graduate in landing a job is no different from that of a college graduate.

The same magazine showed the conspicuous mismatch of the yearly graduates and the number of jobs available. This was cited as one of the main reasons why Filipinos choose to leave and work in other countries. The study also showed the number of months or even years new graduates have to wait before they get employed.

Needless to say, what the country needs is a president who is resolute in addressing the perennial problem of unemployment. We did not persevere through college, endure high tuition fees, make do with dilapidated facilities and services due to drastic cuts in the education budget for the last decade only to be left unemployed.

The President does not need to flaunt her "Programang Pantrabaho ni GMA" in major thoroughfares, municipalities and barangays when it is very obvious that this is but another political gimmick. Why these "jobs" surfaced only now when millions of Filipinos have been jobless since the start of her term proves the project's suspicious intent.

GMA's claim of giving one million jobs is yet another political publicity stunt aimed at salvaging her dwindling popularity.

We do not need superficial promises, we need jobs. We are sick and tired of hearing false statements and promises. We challenge the other presidential candidates to provide concrete solutions and programs to address this problem.

—GLYZIEL M. GOTIANGCO,
national secretary general,
National Union of Students
of the Philippines,
42 B Agno St.,
Barangay Doña Josefa, QC

Sex and gender sensitivity

IN THE NEWS report (PDI, 3/7/04) "Holes bored in ferry to speed up recovery" by Leila Salaverria, she wrote, "Yesterday, three of the five bodies found on Friday were also retrieved. But their **genders** could not be determined as they were in an advanced stage of decomposition..." (underscoring supplied). The correct term to use in this instance is "sex," not gender.

Sex is a biologically determined identity (male or female) while gender is a sociocultural identification of a person (man, woman, gay, etc)., We can change society's beliefs and treatment of women, gays, lesbians, transgenders by, for example, changing our discriminatory views and treatment of them. Sex however, can only be obviously changed through medical intervention although how far the biological change can be made is still open to debate.

We must point out this error not only because it is common, but more importantly because it can create public confusion and negatively affect efforts to educate the public about gender issues. The greater awareness of media people about gender is a happy development though. The most important thing is the willingness to know in order that news reports will be more gender-sensitive. For example, information other than just the sex of survivors, like how many were pregnant and if services were provided to them would help in drawing attention to the fact that men and women have different needs for services.

—FATIMA ALVAREZ-CASTILLO,
former director,
Center for Gender
and Women Studies,
University of the
Philippines Manila

MJCI, gov't roles in horse races

WE refer to your sports column "One Winner" of Edwin Villanueva last March 21 titled "Hocus focus at SLLP" wherein comments by alleged racing fans were published. I wish to quote, "*Isa pa ang First Pick kung saan may 20 winners. Total gross for the pick 6 ay 1.9+ M less natin sa tax na 35 percent=1.2+ M. Kaya ang dapat na prize nung 20 winners ay around 61 to 62 thousand pesos pero and naging dividend ay 59 thou lang. Maliwanag na 2 to 3 thousand ang cut ng SLLP sa 20 winners! Siguro kinapos sila para sa Commissioner's Cup kaya cut sila dito para pandagdag.*"

To begin with, the Manila Jockey Club Inc./San Lazaro Leisure Park has no control in determining the dividend payouts. This job belongs to an American company called United Tote whose system is used in many world-class race tracks throughout the United States and other countries. They are monitored and cleared by the Games and Amusement Board which is under the Office of the President.

On the other hand, the conduct of the races are controlled and monitored by the Philippine Racing Commission also under the Office of the President.

In reference to the first pick 6 of March 14, hereunder are the actual and correct data: sales—P1,913,482; winners—P42 or 21 tickets; dividends—P59,044.60 per ticket of P2.

As to the determination of winners, the club's photo finish camera focused at the finish line is the only official photo finish camera. The camera is mounted on a stand which is vaulted to a concrete floor to prevent movement. Since we started racing in Carmona, Cavite, the camera has been tested and rechecked to assure its accuracy. The photo results are decided by a board of judges in declaring the winner. But prior to the official decision, the declaration is forwarded to the Board of Stewards for final confirmation. Then and only then is the official winner declared.

In closing, we wish to reiterate our company's position that we welcome constructive criticism. But it appears that Villanueva has consistently criticized our club with no basis in many of his columns. I pray that in the coming days we can resolve all our differences.

—HENRI S. KAHN,
vice president for marketing
and corporate affairs,
Manila Jockey Club Inc.,
14/F Strata 100 Building,
Emerald Avenue,
Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Water rate increase not sure yet

IN BEHALF of the MWSS-Regulatory Office, I would like to clarify the issue on the impending water rate increase as claimed by your banner story on March 23, 2004. The report quoted me as saying that "water rates would have to be raised to help cover the debts that Maynilad did not pay."

This is not true. In no instance, did I mention this to your reporter.

I told your reporter, Christine Gaylican, that we have to go back to the drawing board to determine any rate adjustment once the new Maynilad submitted its business plan.

This does not necessarily mean we would be raising the water rate; it could also mean the lowering of the price of water based on the new business plan of Maynilad.

—EDUARDO C. SANTOS,
chief regulator, Metropolitan
Waterworks and Sewerage
System-Regulatory Office,
Katipunan Road, Balara, QC

Vow breakers

HIGH BLOOD

Corazon Mercado-Oliver

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

PERHAPS believing that love is forever, couples pledge their undying love for each other. But the debris of broken hearts proves that love does die and the most often cited cause is infidelity—not necessarily just on the part of the man but also of the woman.

And since time immemorial, women have been unfaithful. In Homer's Iliad (written between 400 and 200 B.C), Helen of Troy, whose beauty is immortalized by Tennyson as "the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium," elopes with the Trojan Prince Paris, thereby, starting a war that dragged on for 10 years.

The world is strewn with so many Helens who may not be as young and as beautiful, but just as unfaithful. Here are some of them:

The Scorned. She is Euripides' Medea who exacts revenge on her faithless husband by killing her own children. The scorned wife of the present will never take her children's lives, for her maternal instinct is strong. Besides, no chariot will rescue her from human wrath. So, she patiently bears with her philandering husband who never misses a chance to hurl insults at her and to rake up imagined sins of commission and omission at the drop of a hat. She wallows in self-pity, her self-esteem hitting rock bottom. But since whatever sinks inevitably rises, she wakes up one day and realizes the folly of martyrdom. Having read "hell hath no fury than a woman scorned," she embarks on a journey of revenge, seeking a man who can appreciate what and who she is. Never mind sinking into the depths of depravity.

The Romantic. Her husband has forgotten that she needs romancing, although not always in the sexual realm. After 10, 15, or 20 years of marriage, gone are the movie dates, when they used to hold hands and he wipes away her tears as Cary Grant is about to leave Deborah Kerr in "An Affair to Remember." Now, when a similar scene appears on the TV screen and wife sheds a tear, husband chides her, "You're crazy crying over a movie!" No more Valentine dinners or anniversary outings, too. Worse, he is suddenly afflicted with amnesia during such occasions. She thinks of smothering him with a pillow while he snores, but she doesn't want to spend the rest of her life behind prison bars. She lets her creativity take the better part of her, looking for romance away from hearth and home.

The Adventurer. She is married to one who has a heavy baggage of sexual taboos. Only the missionary position for them and no kissing except on the lips, forehead, or cheeks. Then, she hears her friends talking about the French kiss and about 30 or more positions! Or, she accidentally comes across the "Kamasutra" or "Lady Chatterley's Lover" or "The Adventurer." She is jolted into realizing that she's missing out on life. Thus, clad in a newly bought sheer negligee, she entices her monk of a husband to try what she has heard about or read. Rebuffed, chastised and feeling deprived, she decides to add an extra erotic charge to her life. She then sets off on a sexual quest which, in most likelihood, will validate her "information."

The Dreamer. No longer in the prime of her life, she equips her dresser with all the anti-aging creams the market offers and pesters her dermatologist with constant unscheduled visits the moment she spots a line that forebodes a wrinkle or crow's feet. But alas! Gravity proves to be a tough enemy! Fine lines develop into marked ones and her face begins to sag. She thinks of a facelift but junks the idea when she notices how her friends who've had it cannot even smile. And then, one day, she hears about a friend who suddenly looks younger than her age--sans creams and collagen treatments and facelifts. Her secret? A lover! And true enough, 20 or more years are gone! Her eyes sparkle, her cheeks glow, her feet spring! Her restless ennui is gone!

The Doormat. Having been married for decades, she has the uncanny ability to anticipate all her husband's needs (including putting paste on his toothbrush), but has willfully chosen to ignore her own. Her husband has completely forgotten his similes (that marriage/love is like a plant) and his biology (that a plant has to be nurtured in order to live). Wife gets invited to a dance, or tennis, or swimming and meets a DI or a coach who, of course, dances to her attention, and voila!, she is now open territory!

The Provider. She has a husband who has completely ceded his role as breadwinner. He refuses to work, for after all, wife earns enough for him and their children. She pays all the bills, the kids' tuition, rent, amortizations and maids' wages. She gives him an allowance for cigarettes, booze and "boys' night out." She has to; otherwise, he will whine about getting bored in the house or complain of stiff neck (from too much lying in bed). Slowly, she begins to resent these obligations. Eventually, love flies out of the window and their nest turns into hell. If a third party comes along, he is manna from heaven.

The Gold Digger. She has fine tastes in jewelry and clothes which, of course, her salaried husband cannot afford. Beautiful or well-poised or both, she looks for one who can be cajoled into giving in to her whims. An aging politician, for example. She gives him the time of his life and is, of course, rewarded with wads of violets.

What about the loved and pampered women (wrinkles and cellulites notwithstanding) who break their vows? Well, they are the promiscuous ones—the Madame Bovarys who believe that all women are by nature prostitutes. They are the worst of the lot!

Corazon Mercado-Oliver is the executive director of the Dynamic Educators Training Center and the acting Area 5 director of Zonta International.

Across the NATION

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

Assistant Editor **Tony Bergonia**

Minors rescued from recruiters

DAVAO CITY—Authorities rescued 11 girls, eight of whom are of minor age, while they were about to board a passenger plane at the Davao International Airport on Friday night.

The victims were reportedly accompanied by two recruitment agency executives at the airport and were on their way to Manila to be trained as entertainers in Japan.

Members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (PCTC), and Airport Security Group acted on a tip and conducted the operation at around 7 p.m. Friday.

Supt. Jose Pante, CIDG director, said the victims, whose ages range from 15 to 20, come from as far as Jose Abad Santos in Davao del Sur and Mati in Davao Oriental.

He said the girls already had their plane tickets for Manila.

Pante said the girls applied as entertainers at the Marrick Placement Services Inc. (MPSI), formerly the Marcony Placement Agency, located at the Nova Tierra Village, Lanang.

But the victims were using fictitious names and tampered birth certificates to appear that they are of legal age, he said.

The girls were later turned over to the Department of Social Welfare and Development as their parents were already informed of the fate of their daughters, he said.

In Zamboanga City, the Task Force Turista-Zamboanga Peninsula, a special unit of the Philippine National Police in Western Mindanao rescued on Thursday a German boy from his own father.

Police Supt. Angelito Casimiro, the chief of Task Force Turista identified the German kidnapped victim as Philipp Julian Ammon, 7 years old with Passport Number D8622061 and his father-abductor as Andreas Ammon with Passport Number 6347008734, also a German national.

"The German boy was rescued from the custody of his father in a rented house at Summer Hill Subdivision in barangay Pasonanca after we tailed Mr. Ammon and his girlfriend at the Zamboanga City Golf Course Club in Upper Calarian," Casimiro told the INQUIRER.

May Ammon said the boy was snatched from her in August 2003 when Andreas allegedly asked the boy to join him in Disneyland in France.

She said she divorced her husband and she was granted sole custody of the boy with only visiting rights to her divorced husband.

She met her husband while on a study grant in Germany and divorced him after he allegedly beat her up.

She learned that her husband brought the boy to the Philippines early March and immediately coordinated with the National Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation.

She was assisted until they monitored the location of Andreas and her son in Boracay.

Andreas, upon sensing the movements of the authorities, brought the boy to the South, "and we were able to monitor his destination in Zamboanga City. Upon arrival here, we sought the help of the Zamboanga City Police office, but they displayed lack of interest."

She then sought the help of Task Force Turista and was able to recover her son. *Anthony S. Allada and Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Kidnapped Sulu trader freed

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Marine soldiers recovered a kidnapped businessman in Barangay Maligay, Patikul, Sulu, on Friday night, some 134 days after suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits abducted him.

But Brig. Gen. Nelson Allaga, 3rd Marine Brigade commander, said the 40-year-old victim, Ramon Inoferio, showed signs of extreme trauma.

Allaga said it was hard to talk to the victim as he "kept mentioning about mortar and cannon fires."

Inoferio's wrists and legs had bruises sustained from being chained during his captivity, Allaga added.

"I even pleaded to my captors to kill me because I could no longer walk," Allaga quoted Inoferio as saying.

Inoferio's trauma could be a result of the March 4 encounter in Patikul where the Marine soldiers requested for aerial and ground assault against some 200 Abu Sayyaf.

The victim was abducted near Patikul on Nov. 20 last year, reportedly after failing to pay a P40,000 debt to a business partner. He was later turned over to a faction of the Abu Sayyaf.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko claimed that Inoferio was rescued.

Allaga, however, said "we simply picked him up after he was abandoned in Maligay."

Two local officials, Allaga said, earlier intervened for the immediate and safe release of the victim. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Cops, Army alerted as rebels sighted near Casecnan dam

CAMP SATURNINO DUMLAO, Nueva Vizcaya—Police and military officials have stepped up security at the site of the Casecnan dam following the reported massing up of communist rebels in villages near borders of Nueva Vizcaya and Nueva Ecija.

Senior Supt. Felix Caddali, Nueva Vizcaya police director, revealed the sighting last week of about 30 suspected New People's Army rebels in Barangay Abuyo in Alfonso Castañeda town, some 170 km from here.

He said the rebels might have been planning to destroy the power plant of the Casecnan Multi-Power and Irrigation Project (CMIPP) power plant in Barangay Villarica in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija.

The activities were believed to be part of the rebel movement's celebration of its 35th founding anniversary on March 29, he said.

The entire CMIPP complex is composed of two weirs that collect water from two rivers in upland Pelaway village and divert the river flow through two 26-km long tunnels to the power plant. The water is then flushed out to the Pantabangan reservoir.

"(The heightened alert) remains in effect in the area even up to now as we could not discount the possibility that attacks could be launched anytime," said Caddali, who is also the Casecnan Security Task Group (CSTG) chief.

He said troops belonging to the Army's 71st Infantry Battalion are patrolling the villages near the CMIPP to stop the rebels who retreated to the Caraballo mountains.

But lack of personnel has prevented the military from setting up a detachment in Sitio Mulawin, where the dam's tunnel exits are located.

"Setting up the base would be a better security measure than just conducting mobile patrols at the area," Caddali said.

Lawyer Linda Castillo, vice president of California Energy-Casecnan, the company that owns and operates CMIPP, earlier said its private security force has tightened security following the report. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

NPA guns silent during Holy Week

LUCENA CITY—In observance of Holy Week, communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said New People's Army rebels would not be staging tactical offensives against enemy forces.

"By tradition, the entire revolutionary forces as much as possible would hold on to their guns in peace by not launching any attack against legitimate enemy forces unless we are provoked. We don't want to disturb the masses in their moments of prayer and meditation during Holy Week," Rosal told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

But he added that the rebel forces would maintain a strategic defensive mode during their self-imposed cease-fire.

"We also observe the holiness of the occasion by momentarily silencing our guns just to prove that the Red-fighters also love peace," said Higom Maragang, spokesperson of the NPA Lucio de Guzman Command that operates in Occidental Mindoro.

"Those reports that the NPA is anti-religion are all lies being peddled by the military. We respect all the religions of the masses. Even the NPA members came from different religions," he said in another phone interview.

Rosal explained that just like their traditional observance of cease-fire during Christmas and New Year, "we also show our reverence to the Filipino Christian tradition that there should be peace in a period like Holy Week."

"We even encourage our comrades to join the traditional reading of the Pasyon whenever there is one inside our controlled area. The much older comrades can easily join the Pabasa and chant the Pasyon, compared to the younger cadres," Rosal said.

He explained: "In the minimum, we urge every cadre to respect the tradition. In the maximum, we also encourage them to join the Pabasa."

But he quickly added: "There is no more reading of Pasyon inside the guerrilla camp."

Pabasa is a traditional celebration of reading or chanting of the "Pasyon" that depicts the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Modern melodies and musical styles have been composed in the rendering of the Pasyon, which is traditionally observed during Lent.

Rosal said he used to finish three Pasyon, in silent reading when he was still not part of the revolutionary movement. "But when my elders would chant it the old way, I can easily go along and join the elders in their singing of the Pasyon." *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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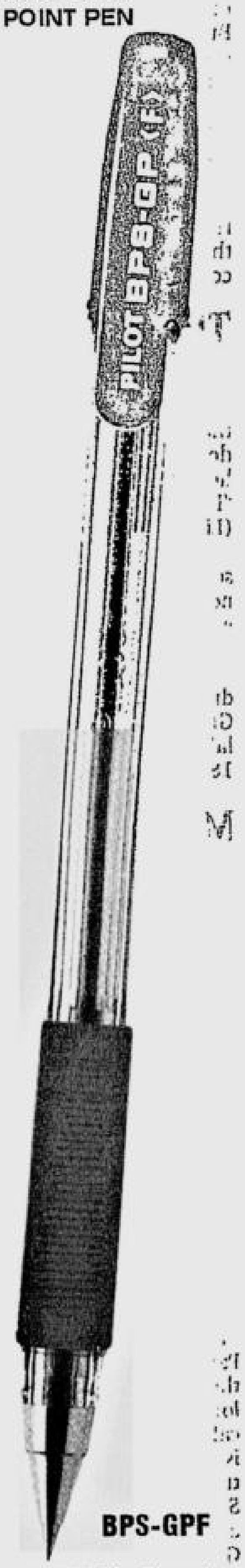

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Tribal elders now consult youth in choosing bets

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAGADA, Mt. Province—Tribal elders, who used to wield influence on the choice of their groups' local and national candidates, have now turned to the youth for advice on who they would support and endorse in the May 10 elections.

Karl Gulian, a native of this town and education and propaganda chair of Anakbayan-Mt. Province, said members of the town's council of elders are now listening to the opinion of the youth who want to change politics "in a democratic way."

"The voters were very clannish before. Electoral process here used to rely on the *kamag-anak* (relative) and *kaibigan* (friend) systems. But now, it has changed because the economic, political and social conditions in the town have also changed. The elders and the youth (are now partners in political decisions)," Gulian said.

Outgoing Mayor Thomas Killip said modern day politics has corrupted and divided some villagers here.

Killip, who has decided to retire from politics after serving as Sagada mayor for nine consecutive years, said in the old days, villagers did not choose their leaders through popular votes.

He said leaders were chosen among elders and based on their age, wisdom and integrity.

"It is also important that you have no track record of cheating your own village mates. You should be able to speak for their welfare when the situation demands. When you grow old, the community refers their problems to you and such respect reflects your ability to lead," Killip said.

He said modern day politics is "foreign" to local elders. He said clans were divided and villagers joined political mudslinging because of the divisive, corrupt and violent nature of politics.

"It is not that the people have evil intentions, it is just that politics is inherently corrupt. Elders who are not familiar with this practice are resigned to say, 'You, young people who go to school, give us the proper information about our candidates,'" he said.

Killip said elders consult the youth even on their choices of presidential candidates.

He said elders, some of whom could not read and write, talk to the youth to gather more information for the right choices of candidates.

In blessing and supporting the candidates, Gulian said he grew up seeing elders in the *dap-ay* (circular stone structure where elders meet and talk about community issues) conducting rituals by offering chickens to spirits.

Gulian said villagers adopt this practice whenever elections come.

He said elders would "read" or interpret the position of the bile of the chicken if it would favor the candidate's bid.

Dave Gulian, who is running for councilor in this town, is an active participant in dap-ay sessions and has acknowledged the importance of the elders and rituals in political decisions.

He said instead of presenting his platforms through a campaign rally, he consulted with and listened to the elders about the needs of their villages. A ritual would follow after he gets the elders' blessings.

Killip said rituals are also performed to protect candidates from bad luck and harm.

Syndicates using NPA campaign fees, says Solcom

LEGAZPI CITY—Army Major Jose Broso, Armed Forces Southern Luzon Unified Command Civil Relations Service chief, appealed to local candidates not to give in to the caprices and harassment of syndicates using the name of the New People's Army (NPA) to extort money from them in the guise of permit-to-campaign fees.

Broso said military intelligence reports had it that some Albay and Camarines Sur candidates had received letters from alleged NPA units operating in their areas asking for a "settlement" with their group before entering the so-called guerrilla zones for their campaign.

Broso said some candidates for municipal council even received demand letters for amounts ranging from P8,000 to P25,000, depending on their financial capability.

He warned that the group asking for payment of permit-to-campaign fees might just be an extortion gang posing as NPA rebels.

Broso said the rebels' logo could be easily copied and reproduced.

"With the present technology, the letterhead with the logo of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) could easily be done in a computer," he added.

Broso said the CPP-NPA is reportedly imposing the same PTC rates in the 2001 elections.

He said the NPA rates are imposed depending on the position and town classification—for mayor, P50,000 or two M-16 Armalite rifles; P200,000 or eight M-16 Armalite rifles for congressman, P300,000 for governor and P500,000 to P1 million for senatorial candidate.

Broso assured the public that the military is doing everything to stamp out PTC collection in the far-flung villages to give all the candidates equal opportunity to campaign. *Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

HOLY WEEK SPECTACLE

Filipinos don't need a movie to get all riled up about Lent. This Mary Magdalene, a saint in older scriptures but turned by later Church leaders into a whore figure, dabs off blood from a Filipino Christ. The Pinoy passion begins annually on the streets of Samal, Bataan, all the way to the town plaza where the Senakulista ng Calaguiman presents Christ's last hours on earth. Thousands troop to view this spectacle.

Political rivalry seen in mauling of village, SK execs in Olongapo

OLONGAPO CITY—Two village officials known to be supporting the camp of Mayor Katherine Gordon were beaten up on March 31 by six men believed to be supporters of Gordon's rival for the congressional seat in Zambales' first district, reports here said.

Police said Romulo Buencamino, 55, a member of the Barangay Gordon Heights council, and Randy de los Santos, 18, a Sangguniang Kabataan member, were hurt when the suspects attacked them in front of the barangay hall.

Gordon's supporters claimed the men were supporters of Maria Milagros "Mitos" Magsaysay, daughter-in-law of Zambales Gov. Vicente Magsaysay.

Magsaysay, however, denied that the suspects were her supporters, saying police reports did not link her to the incident.

"That's not true. I have nothing to do with that. I was campaigning in Sitio Agusuhin when that incident happened," Magsaysay told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

She said her name was dragged into the incident when Gordon, during an interview with a local television station, claimed that it was the Magsaysays' "style" to beat up supporters of their rivals.

In a report to Gordon, Damian de los Santos, Gordon Heights barangay captain, said the men beat up Buencamino and then attacked De los Santos when he tried to help Buencamino.

Police said the men, aboard a Mitsubishi Delica and Isuzu Crosswind vans carrying posters of Magsaysay, arrived at the barangay hall and asked Buencamino to approach them.

Reports said the suspects were overheard by witnesses as saying, "*Halika kagawad, may ipapakita lang kami sa iyo. Meron lang maliit na problema* (Come here kagawad, we'll just show you something. There's just a little problem)."

Police reports said when Buencamino approached the group, the suspects immediately beat him up "with no apparent reason." *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Army, police define roles in securing Negros Oriental polls

DUMAGUETE CITY—The military and the police in Negros Oriental have agreed to divide security operations in the province in the upcoming May elections to insure that the whole province would be fully secured, particularly on Election Day.

The Philippine Army has agreed to take care of the security of remote villages and those constantly frequented by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

The Philippine National Police, on the other hand, is tasked to provide security of barangays within the 10-kilometer radius from the town proper of a municipality or city in the province on Election Day.

The arrangement was forged during a command conference on Wednesday at the PNP Provincial Office here that was participated in by officials from the PNP, the Army and the Commission on Elections.

Presided over by Comelec provincial supervisor Rogelio Benjamin, the conference was also attended by Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sodusta, brigade commander of the Army in Negros Island, and police provincial director Senior Supt. Amaron B. Morrok.

Benjamin, however, told the INQUIRER that the Army might still be requested in providing security in barangays within the 10-km radius if activities of the rebels in those barangays are greatly felt.

Barangays Pinocawan and Malangsa in Vallahermoso, a town some 147 km north of here, for instance, will most likely be placed under the Army's tight watch because of the constant presence of suspected NPA rebels, Benjamin said.

A former Army soldier was killed in broad daylight last month in Malangsa by gunmen who identified themselves as NPA rebels.

Vallahermoso is one of the municipalities tagged by the Comelec as an "area of concern" because of the presence of suspected NPA rebels in some of its barangays and its history of political violence. *Romy G. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Criminal complaint filed against Osmeña son

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Vice Gov. John Gregory Osmeña is facing a criminal complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman-Visayas (OMB-Visayas) for his alleged involvement in the foundation that turned out later to be bogus.

Aside from Osmeña, also facing a criminal case of violation for the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act are board member Victor Maambong and eight officials of the Perdido Lex Foundation.

They are Milagros Herrera, Fe Tan, Nancy Sia, Veronica Caceres, Teodora Limcangco, Michael Santos, Letty de Guzman and Adelaida Osorio.

Osmeña's executive assistant Wilfredo Mulla would be investigated for dishonesty.

Deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas Primo Miro approved the recommendation of Ombudsman Director Virginia Santiago to upgrade the case from a fact-finding inquiry into a formal case.

Osmeña declined to comment on the findings of the anti-graft office.

He instead said Gov. Pablo Garcia should also be investigated because he also signed the contract in December 2002 with Perdido Lex so that the latter could avail of financial aid from the provincial government.

Garcia's daughter Gwendolyn Garcia and Osmeña are bitter rivals in the gubernatorial race. Osmeña is running under the administration K-4 coalition and Gwendolyn, under Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats.

In a 16-page memorandum, Santiago said she did not recommend the filing of administrative complaint against Osmeña and Maambong because such might become mooted due to the forthcoming election.

Maambong, who is seeking reelection, was committee chair on cooperatives and NGO accreditation. He recommended the accreditation of the foundation.

The Office of the Ombudsman conducted a fact-finding inquiry last February based on newspaper reports that Perdido Lex received P5 million from Osmeña's discretionary funds supposedly to finance a computer education program in various schools in the province, which later turned out to be a ghost project.

Records at the Securities and Exchange Commission showed that the foundation was registered on Oct. 24, 2002. The foundation had not submitted any liquidation report since it received the money in 2003.

The National Bureau of Investigation turned over the case to the anti-graft office in February, including some documents that showed Perdido Lex defrauding the government of P4.1 million.

Santiago said there was a clear link between Perdido Lex and the vice governor considering that Caceres, Osmeña's caretaker, was an official of the foundation.

Aside from this, she said documents showed that the vice governor was "actively involved in the release of the funds to the foundation."

She cited the March 5, 2003 letter of Herrera, president of Perdido Lex, thanking Osmeña for attending its presentation of their programs. Herrera had also other letters addressed to and noted by Osmeña.

Santiago said it was Osmeña who requested for the release of funds to Perdido Lex and the money was released to Herrera who was accompanied by Mulla.

She also noted that Osmeña pressured the provincial accountant to release additional money to the foundation and guaranteed compliance of Perdido Lex later.

"It can safely be gathered that he has a connection with this foundation, which up to this time nobody bothered to come out to shed light on the issue," she said.

Santiago did not include Garcia who also signed the memorandum of agreement between the provincial capitol and the foundation.

He said the duty of the governor was only ministerial since there was already a board resolution authorizing him to enter into a contract.

Brother Eddie: Victory is mine on May 10

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Victory will be his in the May 10 elections, Christian evangelist and Bangon Pilipinas presidential candidate Eddie Villanueva boldly said on Friday, the first time he barnstormed in Pampanga, President Macapagal-Arroyo's home province.

"Absolutely," Villanueva, also the spiritual leader of the Jesus Is Lord Movement, said of his winning.

He said political rallies organized by his Bangon Pilipinas party in Visayan, Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon provinces and cities in recent weeks had drawn big crowds that surpassed several times over the targets.

In Pampanga, 5,000 of his supporters joined a motorcade consisting of cars and trucks that spanned four kilometers long. It stalled traffic in this Pampanga capital city from 8:30 to 10 a.m.

More than 2,000 supporters, all clad in yellow shirts, gathered in front of city hall here to welcome him and as he paid a courtesy call on Mayor Rey Aquino.

Before kicking off the motorcade in the province's major towns, Villanueva made the rounds of the old public market, spending time with vendors.

May Nicolas, 31, a San Fernando resident, said she was voting for the evangelist because "he wants genuine change and he is a righteous leader."

His organizers said at least 15,000 people were expected in Villanueva's rally in Angeles City on Friday night.

In an interview, he said the "revival of patriotism is thrusting him to (the) highest position in the land." That, he pointed out, is the key to the recovery of the country.

"We believe May 10 will be the resurrection day of the Philippines, and there will be sunrise," Villanueva said, referring to his party's 40-day countdown to victory and national renewal" of the country.

Began on April 1 and to end on elections day, the countdown symbolizes the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the evangelist said. The resurrection is observed in the country during the Lenten period.

Villanueva said he would take a break from campaigning on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday next week, planning to spend these days to praying, fasting and assessing the party's campaign strategies in the remaining weeks.

The Commission on Elections bans campaign activities on those days of the Holy Week.

Amid the pomp and noise of his campaigning here, Villanueva said "no one but the Lord and the people's unity and love for country would save the Philippines."

He clarified that his stand on the country's huge foreign debt was not one of seeking a moratorium on debt payments. "I need to win because our government needs moral ascendancy. I'm very confident (that with my moral ascendancy), I can convince a consortium of foreign banks to agree on a mutual agreement giving us a grace period for debt payments," he said.

He said the money that was supposed to go into settling the debts could be used for "massive economic development projects." *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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Tribal elders now consult youth in choosing bets

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAGADA, Mt. Province—Tribal elders, who used to wield influence on the choice of their groups' local and national candidates, have now turned to the youth for advice on who they would support and endorse in the May 10 elections.

Karl Gulian, a native of this town and education and propaganda chair of Anakbayan-Mt. Province, said members of the town's council of elders are now listening to the opinion of the youth who want to change politics "in a democratic way."

"The voters were very clannish before. Electoral process here used to rely on the *kamag-anak* (relative) and *kaibigan* (friend) systems. But now, it has changed because the economic, political and social conditions in the town have also changed. The elders and the youth (are now partners in political decisions)," Gulian said.

Outgoing Mayor Thomas Killip said modern day politics has corrupted and divided some villagers here.

Killip, who has decided to retire from politics after serving as Sagada mayor for nine consecutive years, said in the old days, villagers did not choose their leaders through popular votes.

He said leaders were chosen among elders and based on their age, wisdom and integrity.

"It is also important that you have no track record of cheating your own village mates. You should be able to speak for their welfare when the situation demands. When you grow old, the community refers their problems to you and such respect reflects your ability to lead," Killip said.

He said modern day politics is "foreign" to local elders. He said clans were divided and villagers joined political mudslinging because of the divisive, corrupt and violent nature of politics.

"It is not that the people have evil intentions, it is just that politics is inherently corrupt. Elders who are not familiar with this practice are resigned to say, 'You, young people who go to school, give us the proper information about our candidates,'" he said.

Killip said elders consult the youth even on their choices of presidential candidates.

He said elders, some of whom could not read and write, talk to the youth to gather more information for the right choices of candidates.

In blessing and supporting the candidates, Gulian said he grew up seeing elders in the *dap-ay* (circular stone structure where elders meet and talk about community issues) conducting rituals by offering chickens to spirits.

Gulian said villagers adopt this practice whenever elections come.

He said elders would "read" or interpret the position of the bile of the chicken if it would favor the candidate's bid.

Dave Gulian, who is running for councilor in this town, is an active participant in dap-ay sessions and has acknowledged the importance of the elders and rituals in political decisions.

He said instead of presenting his platforms through a campaign rally, he consulted with and listened to the elders about the needs of their villages. A ritual would follow after he gets the elders' blessings.

Killip said rituals are also performed to protect candidates from bad luck and harm.

Syndicates using NPA campaign fees, says Solcom

LEGAZPI CITY—Army Major Jose Broso, Armed Forces Southern Luzon Unified Command Civil Relations Service chief, appealed to local candidates not to give in to the caprices and harassment of syndicates using the name of the New People's Army (NPA) to extort money from them in the guise of permit-to-campaign fees.

Broso said military intelligence reports had it that some Albay and Camarines Sur candidates had received letters from alleged NPA units operating in their areas asking for a "settlement" with their group before entering the so-called guerrilla zones for their campaign.

Broso said some candidates for municipal council even received demand letters for amounts ranging from P8,000 to P15,000, depending on their financial capability.

He warned that the group asking for payment of permit-to-campaign fees might just be an extortion gang posing as NPA rebels.

Broso said the rebels' logo could be easily copied and reproduced.

"With the present technology, the letterhead with the logo of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) could easily be done in a computer," he added.

Broso said the CPP-NPA is reportedly imposing the same PTC rates in the 2001 elections.

He said the NPA rates are imposed depending on the position and town classification—for mayor, P50,000 or two M-16 Armalite rifles; P200,000 or eight M-16 Armalite rifles for congressman, P300,000 for governor and P500,000 to P1 million for senatorial candidate.

Broso assured the public that the military is doing everything to stamp out PTC collection in the far-flung villages to give all the candidates equal opportunity to campaign. *Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Army, police define roles in securing Negros Oriental polls

DUMAGUETE CITY—The military and the police in Negros Oriental have agreed to divide security operations in the province in the upcoming May elections to insure that the whole province would be fully secured, particularly on Election Day.

The Philippine Army has agreed to take care of the security of remote villages and those constantly frequented by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

The Philippine National Police, on the other hand, is tasked to provide security of barangays within the 10-kilometer radius from the town proper of a municipality or city in the province on Election Day.

The arrangement was forged during a command conference on Wednesday at the PNP Provincial Office here that was participated in by officials from the PNP, the Army and the Commission on Elections.

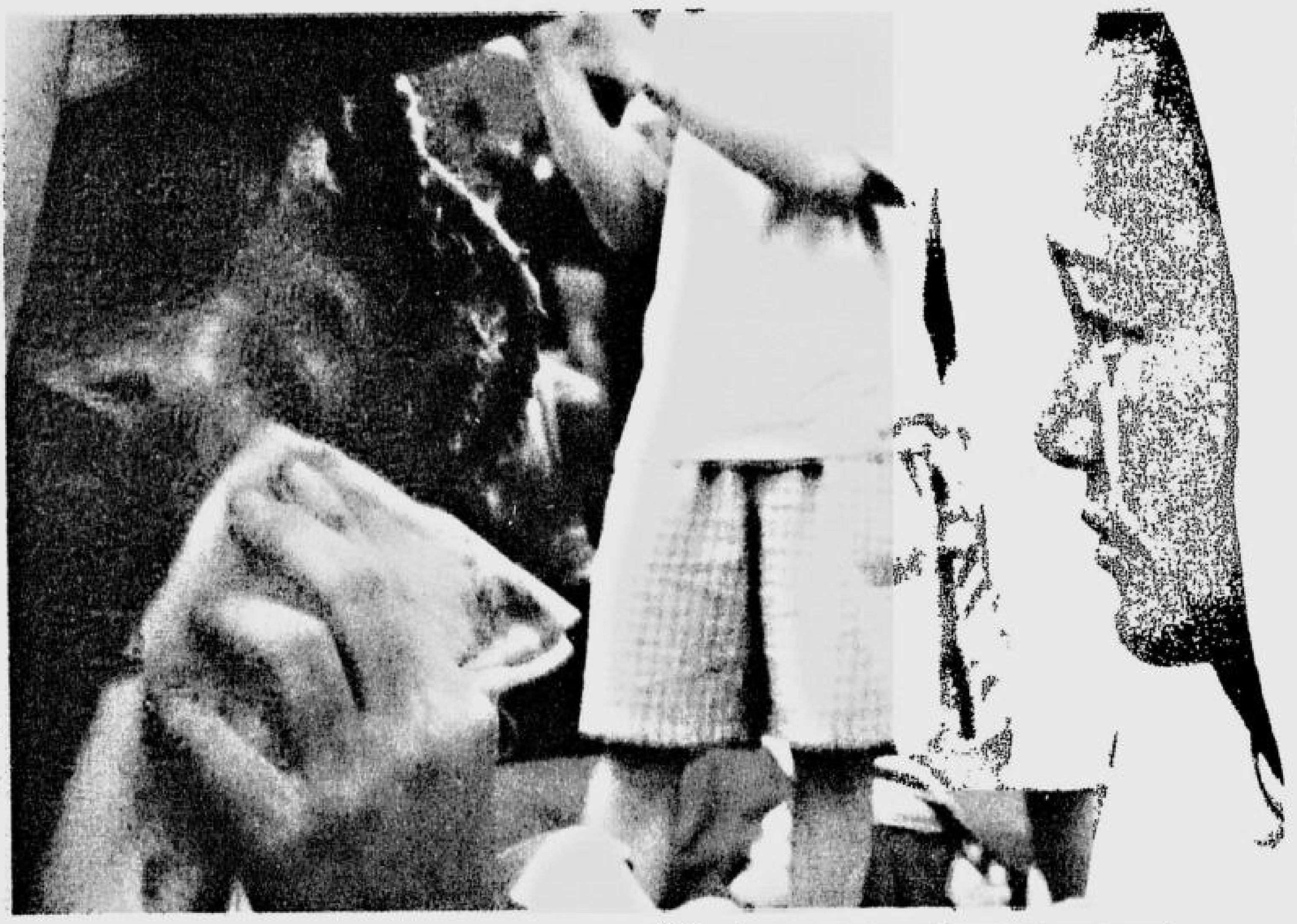
Presided over by Comelec provincial supervisor Rogelio Benjamin, the conference was also attended by Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sodusta, brigade commander of the Army in Negros Island, and police provincial director Senior Supt. Amaron B. Morrok.

Benjamin, however, told the In[illegible] that the Army might still be requested in providing security in barangays within the 10-km radius if activities of the rebels in those barangays are greatly felt.

Barangays Pinocawan and Malangsa in Vallahermoso, a town some 147 km north of here, for instance, will most likely be placed under the Army's tight watch because of the constant presence of suspected NPA rebels, Benjamin said.

A former Army soldier was killed in broad daylight last month in Malangsa by gunmen who identified themselves as NPA rebels.

Vallahermoso is one of the municipalities tagged by the Comelec as an "area of concern" because of the presence of suspected NPA rebels in some of its barangays and its history of political violence. *Romy G. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*



HOLY WEEK SPECTACLE

Filipinos don't need a movie to get all riled up about Lent. This Mary Magdalene, a saint in older scriptures but turned by later Church leaders into a whore figure, dabs off blood from a Filipino Christ. The Pinoy passion begins annually on the streets of Samal, Bataan, all the way to the town plaza where the Senakulista ng Calaguiman presents Christ's last hours on earth. Thousands troop to view this spectacle.

Political rivalry seen in mauling of village, SK execs in Olongapo

OLONGAPO [illegible] Y—Two village officials [illegible] pporting the camp of Ma[illegible] ion were beaten up [illegible] Ma[illegible] x men believed to be supp[illegible] Gordon's rival for the c[illegible] or in Zambales' first distri[illegible] aid

Pol[illegible] Buencamino, 55, a membe[illegible], Gordon Heights counc[illegible] Santos, 18, a Sang[illegible] member, were hurt whe[illegible] attacked them in front of t[illegible]

Gordon's supporters claimed the men were supporters of Maria Milagros "Mitos" Magsaysay, daughter-in-law of Zambales Gov. Vicente Magsaysay.

Magsaysay, however, denied that the suspects were her supporters, saying police reports did not link her to the incident.

"That's not true. I have nothing to do with that. I was campaigning in Sitio Agusuhin when that incident happened," Magsaysay told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

She said her name was dragged into the incident when Gordon, during an interview with a local television station, claimed that it was the Magsaysays' "style" to beat up supporters of their rivals.

In a report to Gordon, Damian de los Santos, Gordon Heights barangay captain, said the men beat up Buencamino and then attacked De los Santos when he tried to help Buencamino.

Police said the men, aboard a Mitsubishi Delica and Isuzu Crosswind vans carrying posters of Magsaysay, arrived at the barangay hall and asked Buencamino to approach them.

Reports said the suspects were overheard by witnesses as saying, "*Halika kagawad, may ipapakita lang kami sa iyo. Meron lang maliit na problema* (Come here kagawad, we'll just show you something. There's just a little problem)."

Police reports said when Buencamino approached the group, the suspects immediately beat him up "with no apparent reason." *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Criminal complaint filed against Osmeña son

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI V[illegible] s Bure[illegible]

CEBU CIT[illegible] Gov. John Gregory Osmeñ[illegible] criminal complaint be[illegible] Ombudsman Vis[illegible] OMB [illegible] his alleged invol[illegible] lation that turne[illegible]

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DAVAO BOMBING REMEMBERED BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

Victims and relatives light candles at the site of the Sasa Wharf in Davao City to remember their loved ones that died from a bombing last year. Killed were 15 persons and injured 55.

Whales, dolphins 'visiting' Bohol early, says tour exec

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACLAYON, Bohol—The whales are early for this year's whale-watching season.

The "summer visitors," as Joselito Baritua, the Pamilacan Island Dolphin and Whale Watching Tours manager, described them, usually appear from March to May.

This time, however, the whales were sighted in the waters off Pamilacan since late February.

"The first sighting of a Bryde's whale was reported last Feb. 25 while three more sperm whales were seen on Feb. 29," Baritua revealed in Cebuano.

After a brief lull, another whale was sighted last March 8, Baritua said.

On a good day, Pamilacan islanders can see the dolphins and even the whales in a spot identified as one of the favorite haunts of dolphins and whales in the country.

He said a German visitor who recently toured the sea off Pamilacan described the sight as "world class."

Five dolphin species are routinely sighted by islanders and guests, namely, the bottle-nosed, long-snouted spinner, fraser, rissos and pan-tropical dolphins.

On the other hand, the most commonly spotted whales are the short-finned pilot and the melon-headed whales.

While the whales don't appear very frequently, Baritua said the dolphins are sighted "almost daily."

He also revealed that the endangered whale shark has been occasionally sighted in the vicinity.

Before the hunting was banned, the whale shark was a prize quarry for Pamilacan residents.

The island traces its name to "pilak," the local name for harpoon which islanders first used in hunting the whale sharks.

Sighted virtually

Baritua claimed that since Jan. 2002, the dolphins have been sighted virtually the whole year round except when the weather is bad.

The frequent appearance of the dolphins and occasional sightings of the whales have resulted in an increase in the number of visitors.

Baritua said the Pamilacan Island Boat Operators and Spotters Association (Pibusa) had reported about 600 visitors since January this year.

Of the total number of guests serviced by Pibusa, Baritua noted a 60-40 ratio with the locals slightly outnumbering foreign visitors.

For the month of April, Baritua said there were already more than 200 visitors booked with the group.

Considering that the peak time for dolphin and whale watching trips is in May yet, Baritua sees no reason why last year's approximately more than 1,600 visitors cannot be surpassed.

Baritua's figures do not include sightseers from the different resorts in Panglao Island.

Money changer abducted in Cotabato

COTABATO CITY—Four heavily armed men snatched a money changer while he was emerging from a restaurant at the city's commercial district on Saturday.

Senior Insp. Abdulwahid Pedtucasan, police station 1 commander, identified the victim as Jordan Abdulla, 40, of Barangay Bagua here.

His brother, Teng, said Jordan had just come from a noon-day prayer at a mosque in Bagua and proceeded to the downtown proper.

Police could not determine the motive of the abduction. The victim's brother said Jordan has no known enemies.

Witnesses said the victim was about to leave the restaurant when met by four men armed with short firearms.

He was forced into a blue Kia van with license plate LCU-954 then sped toward the eastern portion of the city.

Abdulla left his blue Honda Civic car. The Abdulla incident is the fourth kidnapping in the past four months.

Norman Sia, a car dealer, was seized on Dec. 8 while negotiating with a prospective car buyer.

Authorities believed he was turned over to the dreaded Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang that demanded P8 million in ransom.

Domingo Cubita, a retired government employee, was also abducted here last month. His captors were asking P6 million in ransom.

Also in captivity is grocery store owner Zoila Cansi whose captors are asking P5-million ransom.

The latest kidnapping occurred despite tight security measures implemented by both the police and military since the campaign period for local candidates began last month. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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ROUNDUP

Suspected killer nabbed

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet—Police recently arrested a fugitive who was allegedly hired to kill a Kalinga mayor. They arrested Catalino Calwat, who is wanted in Mt. Province for kidnapping and highway robbery, following a surveillance operation in Tabuk, Kalinga. Police reports said Calwat was hired by the relatives of Edwin Lingbawan, driver of Tabuk Mayor Camilo Lammawin, to kill the mayor. Lingbawan died in an ambush last year on his way to Tabuk with the mayor's bodyguards. But police records did not explain why Lingbawan's relatives were blaming Lammawin for his driver's death. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Laguna drivers' discontent

SINILOAN, Laguna—Drivers and operators of about 300 jeepneys in eastern Laguna expressed discontentment with the solution offered by government transport authorities and continued their strike on Tuesday that involved about 60 to 65 percent of jeepneys plying the Siniloan-Sta. Cruz route. Wilmer de Luna, vice president of Eastern Laguna Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association (Eljoda), said the 75-centavo increase in fare is not enough to cut their losses due to the exorbitant increases in oil prices and other maintenance needs of their vehicles. Eddie Adrias, dispatcher/driver of Eljoda, said both Eljoda and members of the Sta. Cruz-Siniloan Jeepney Drivers and Operators Association joined the general transport strike on Tuesday, which virtually crippled traffic and stranded thousands of commuters. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Truck rams 3 houses, kills 3

TAYABAS, Quezon—Three persons were killed, including a one-year-old girl, and two others seriously wounded Thursday when a wayward truck rammed three houses along the Maharlika Highway in Barangay Calumpang here. A police report identified the victims as Norma Nuñez, 48; her son, Oliver, 14; and daughter, Mary Joy, 1. The wounded were identified as Norma's husband, Oscar, and son, Norman. Police said the ill-fated Isuzu six-wheeler softdrinks delivery truck owned by Felix Briones of Barangay Malabanban, Candelaria, was traveling towards Lucena City at around 2:30 p.m., when its left front tire blew out. The truck driver, Jonel de Chavez, lost control of the vehicle and rammed into Nuñez' house, resulting in the immediate death of the victims. The truck rammed into two more houses before it stopped. The driver escaped and was being hunted. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Island caravan

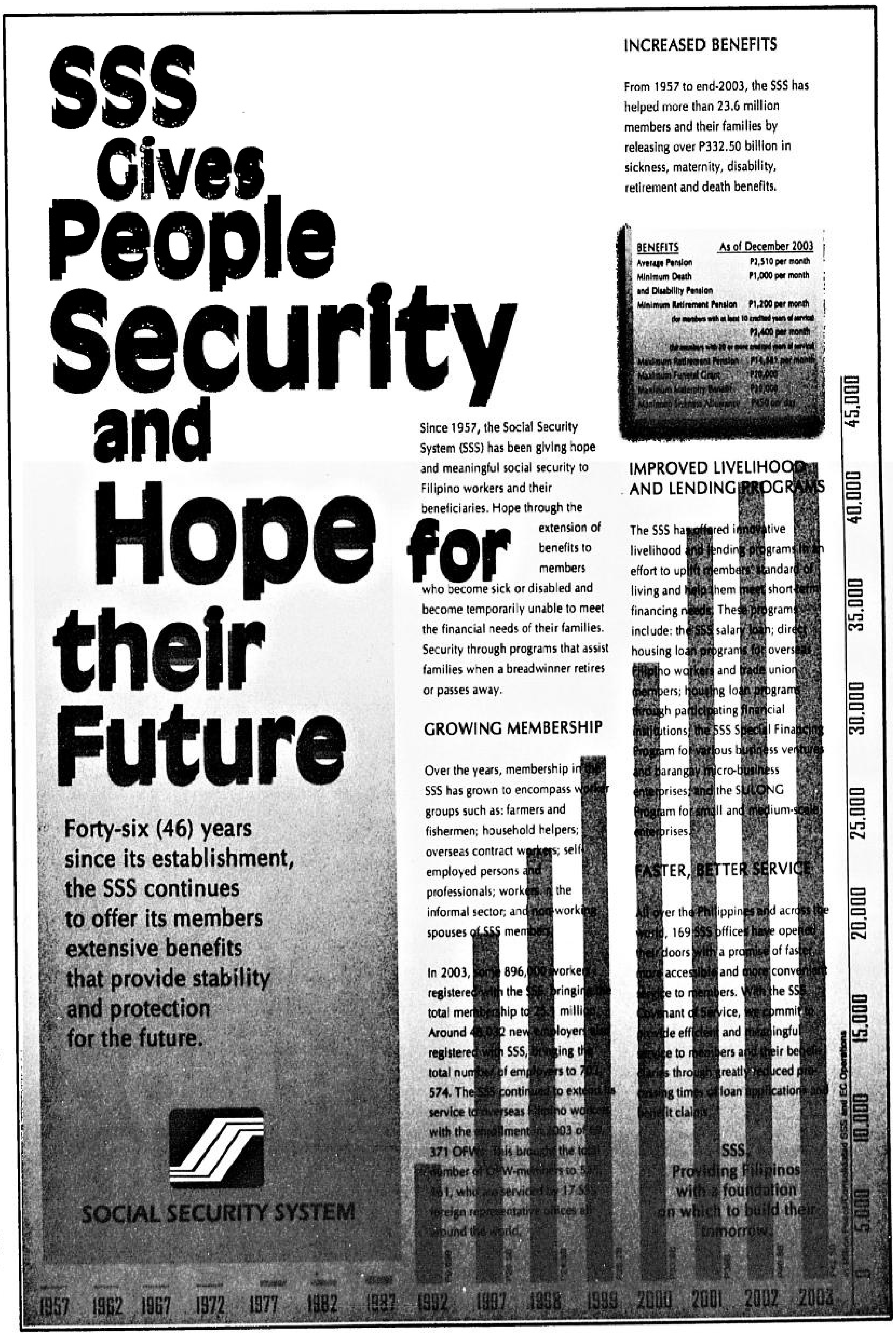
PUERTO GALERA, Oriental Mindoro—The island caravan from Manila to Boracay using the Strong Republic Nautical Highway, had its first run last March 26-30. From Batangas port, the Starlite ferry brought the 80 participants and 40 media persons and their vehicles to Puerto Galera. They proceeded to Calapan City after a brief stopover in Tamaraw Falls in San Teodoro town. The adventure caravan is part of WOW Philippines project of the tourism department in coordination with local governments and travel agencies. The next runs will be on April 17-21 and May 15-19. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon*

Enlightenment seminar

CALAPAN CITY—Only 16 of 42 provincial and district candidates participated in the one-day enlightenment seminar sponsored by the Commission on Elections last March 23 at St.Benedict's Monastery here. The candidates signed a covenant of unity, which provides guidelines for upholding an honest, peaceful and orderly elections. This included non-use of force and non-bribery, like paying fees for permit to campaign or permit to win. Comelec public information officer Ces Querubin said the number of attendees was disheartening as it was like a disregard for Comelec rules. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Samar mayoral bet disqualified

THE COMMISSION on Elections has disqualified a candidate for mayor in Sulat, Eastern Samar for lacking the one year residence requirement, according to a news release. This makes reelectionist mayor Javier E. Zacate the first ever candidate in the town's history to run unopposed. In a resolution promulgated March 19, the Comelec first division presided by Rufino Javier and concurred in by Commissioners Resurreccion Borra and Virgilio Garcillano, unanimously decided to cancel the certificate of candidacy of Daniel A. Jatulan for re-establishing his residence in Sulat only last Dec. 8, 2003 which is less than the one year residence requirement imposed by law. Responding to a petition for disqualification filed by Pedro Opimo, the Comelec agreed with the findings of the provincial election supervisor of Eastern Samar that Jatulan has lost his residence in Sulat when he established his residence in Barangay San Guillermo, Morong, Rizal where he registered as a voter since June 22, 1997 and had voted therein in all national and local elections since then.



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BENEFITS	As of December 2003
Average Pension	P2,510 per month
Minimum Death and Disability Pension	P1,000 per month
Minimum Retirement Pension	P1,200 per month (for members with at least 10 credited years of service) P2,400 per month (for members with 20 or more credited years of service)
Maximum Retirement Pension	P14,[illegible] per month
Maximum Funeral Grant	P20,000
Maximum Maternity Benefit	P[illegible],000
Maximum Sickness Allowance	P[illegible] per day

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GROWING MEMBERSHIP

Over the years, membership in the SSS has grown to encompass worker groups such as: farmers and fishermen; household helpers; overseas contract workers; self-employed persons and professionals; workers in the informal sector; and non-working spouses of SSS members.

In 2003, some 896,000 workers registered with the SSS, bringing the total membership to 25.[illegible] million. Around 4[illegible],032 new employers also registered with SSS, bringing the total number of employers to 70[illegible],574. The SSS continued to extend its service to overseas Filipino workers with the enrollment in 2003 of [illegible],371 OFWs. This brought the total number of OFW-members to 5[illegible],[illegible]61, who are serviced by 17 SSS foreign representative offices all around the world.

IMPROVED LIVELIHOOD AND LENDING PROGRAMS

The SSS has offered innovative livelihood and lending programs in an effort to uplift members' standard of living and help them meet short-term financing needs. These programs include: the SSS salary loan; direct housing loan programs for overseas Filipino workers and trade union members; housing loan programs through participating financial institutions; the SSS Special Financing Program for various business ventures and barangay micro-business enterprises; and the SULONG Program for small and medium-scale enterprises.

FASTER, BETTER SERVICE

All over the Philippines and across the world, 169 SSS offices have opened their doors with a promise of faster, more accessible and more convenient service to members. With the SSS Covenant of Service, we commit to provide efficient and meaningful service to members and their beneficiaries through greatly reduced processing times of loan applications and benefit claims.

SSS, Providing Filipinos with a foundation on which to build their tomorrow.

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DAVAO BOMBING REMEMBERED BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU
Victims and relatives light candles at the site of the Sasa Wharf in Davao City to remember their loved ones that died from a bombing last year. Killed were 15 persons and injured 55.

Whales, dolphins 'visiting' Bohol early, says tour exec

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACLAYON, Bohol—The whales are early for this year's whale-watching season.

The "summer visitors," as Joselito Baritua, the Pamilacan Island Dolphin and Whale Watching Tours manager, described them, usually appear from March to May.

This time, however, the whales were sighted in the waters off Pamilacan since late February.

"The first sighting of a Bryde's whale was reported last Feb. 25 while three more sperm whales were seen on Feb. 29," Baritua revealed in Cebuano.

After a brief lull, another whale was sighted last March 8, Baritua said.

On a good day, Pamilacan islanders can see the dolphins and even the whales in a spot identified as one of the favorite haunts of dolphins and whales in the country.

He said a German visitor who recently toured the sea off Pamilacan described the sight as "world class."

Five dolphin species are routinely sighted by islanders and guests, namely, the bottle-nosed, long-snouted spinner, fraser, rissos and pan-tropical dolphins.

On the other hand, the most commonly spotted whales are the short-finned pilot and the melon-headed whales.

While the whales don't appear very frequently, Baritua said the dolphins are sighted "almost daily."

He also revealed that the endangered whale shark has been occasionally sighted in the vicinity.

Before the hunting was banned, the whale shark was a prize quarry for Pamilacan residents.

The island traces its name to "pilak," the local name for harpoon which islanders first used in hunting the whale sharks.

Sighted virtually

Baritua claimed that since Jan. 2002, the dolphins have been sighted virtually the whole year round except when the weather is bad.

The frequent appearance of the dolphins and occasional sightings of the whales have resulted in an increase in the number of visitors.

Baritua said the Pamilacan Island Boat Operators and Spotters Association (Pibusa) had reported about 600 visitors since January this year.

Of the total number of guests serviced by Pibusa, Baritua noted a 60-40 ratio with the locals slightly outnumbering foreign visitors.

For the month of April, Baritua said there were already more than 200 visitors booked with the group.

Considering that the peak time for dolphin and whale watching trips is in May yet, Baritua sees no reason why last year's approximately more than 1,600 visitors cannot be surpassed.

Baritua's figures do not include sightseers from the different resorts in Panglao Island.

Money changer abducted in Cotabato

COTABATO CITY—Four heavily armed men snatched a money changer while he was emerging from a restaurant at the city's commercial district on Saturday.

Senior Insp. Abdulwahid Pedtucasan, police station 1 commander, identified the victim as Jordan Abdulla, 40, of Barangay Bagua here.

His brother, Teng, said Jordan had just come from a noon-day prayer at a mosque in Bagua and proceeded to the downtown proper.

Police could not determine the motive of the abduction. The victim's brother said Jordan has no known enemies.

Witnesses said the victim was about to leave the restaurant when met by four men armed with short firearms.

He was forced into a blue Kia van with license plate LCU-954 then sped toward the eastern portion of the city.

Abdulla left his blue Honda Civic car. The Abdulla incident is the fourth kidnapping in the past four months.

Norman Sia, a car dealer, was seized on Dec. 8 while negotiating with a prospective car buyer.

Authorities believed he was turned over to the dreaded Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang that demanded P8 million in ransom.

Domingo Cubita, a retired government employee, was also abducted here last month. His captors were asking P6 million in ransom.

Also in captivity is grocery store owner Zoila Cansi whose captors are asking P5-million ransom.

The latest kidnapping occurred despite tight security measures implemented by both the police and military since the campaign period for local candidates began last month. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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ROUNDUP

Suspected killer nabbed

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet—Police recently arrested a fugitive who was allegedly hired to kill a Kalinga mayor. They arrested Catalino Calwat, who is wanted in Mt. Province for kidnapping and highway robbery, following a surveillance operation in Tabuk, Kalinga. Police reports said Calwat was hired by the relatives of Edwin Lingbawan, driver of Tabuk Mayor Camilo Lammawin, to kill the mayor. Lingbawan died in an ambush last year on his way to Tabuk with the mayor's bodyguards. But police records did not explain why Lingbawan's relatives were blaming Lammawin for his driver's death. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Laguna drivers' discontent

SINILOAN, Laguna—Drivers and operators of about 300 jeepneys in eastern Laguna expressed discontentment with the solution offered by government transport authorities and continued their strike on Tuesday that involved about 60 to 65 percent of jeepneys plying the Siniloan-Sta. Cruz route. Wilmer de Luna, vice president of Eastern Laguna Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association (Eljoda), said the 75-centavo increase in fare is not enough to cut their losses due to the exorbitant increases in oil prices and other maintenance needs of their vehicles. Eddie Adrias, dispatcher/driver of Eljoda, said both Eljoda and members of the Sta. Cruz-Siniloan Jeepney Drivers and Operators Association joined the general transport strike on Tuesday, which virtually crippled traffic and stranded thousands of commuters. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Truck rams 3 houses, kills 3

TAYABAS, Quezon—Three persons were killed, including a one-year-old girl, and two others seriously wounded Thursday when a wayward truck rammed three houses along the Maharlika Highway in Barangay Calumpang here. A police report identified the victims as Norma Nuñez, 48; her son, Oliver, 14; and daughter, Mary Joy, 1. The wounded were identified as Norma's husband, Oscar, and son, Norman. Police said the ill-fated Isuzu six-wheeler softdrinks delivery truck owned by Felix Briones of Barangay Malabanban, Candelaria, was traveling towards Lucena City at around 2:30 p.m., when its left front tire blew out. The truck driver, Jonel de Chavez, lost control of the vehicle and rammed into Nuñez' house, resulting in the immediate death of the victims. The truck rammed into two more houses before it stopped. The driver escaped and was being hunted. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Island caravan

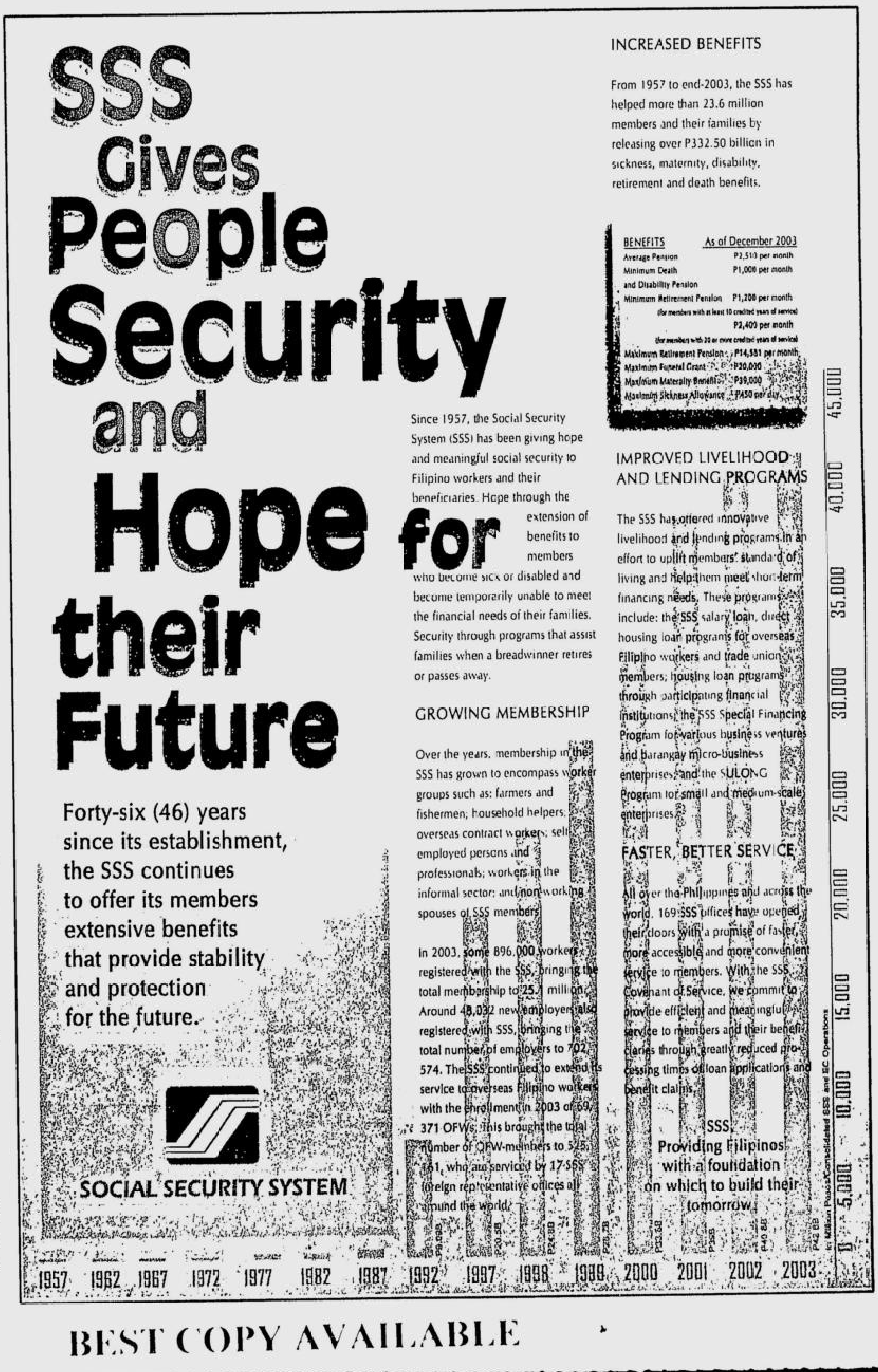
PUERTO GALERA, Oriental Mindoro—The island caravan from Manila to Boracay using the Strong Republic Nautical Highway, had its first run last March 26-30. From Batangas port, the Starlite ferry brought the 80 participants and 40 media persons and their vehicles to Puerto Galera. They proceeded to Calapan City after a brief stopover in Tamaraw Falls in San Teodoro town. The adventure caravan is part of WOW Philippines project of the tourism department in coordination with local governments and travel agencies. The next runs will be on April 17-21 and May 15-19. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon*

Enlightenment seminar

CALAPAN CITY—Only 16 of 42 provincial and district candidates participated in the one-day enlightenment seminar sponsored by the Commission on Elections last March 23 at St.Benedict's Monastery here. The candidates signed a covenant of unity, which provides guidelines for upholding an honest, peaceful and orderly elections. This included non-use of force and non-bribery, like paying fees for permit to campaign or permit to win. Comelec public information officer Ces Querubin said the number of attendees was disheartening as it was like a disregard for Comelec rules. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Samar mayoral bet disqualified

THE COMMISSION on Elections has disqualified a candidate for mayor in Sulat, Eastern Samar for lacking the one year residence requirement, according to a news release. This makes reelectionist mayor Javier E. Zacate the first ever candidate in the town's history to run unopposed. In a resolution promulgated March 19, the Comelec first division presided by Rufino Javier and concurred in by Commissioners Resurreccion Borra and Virgilio Garcillano, unanimously decided to cancel the certificate of candidacy of Daniel A. Jatulan for re-establishing his residence in Sulat only last Dec. 8, 2003 which is less than the one year residence requirement imposed by law. Responding to a petition for disqualification filed by Pedro Opimo, the Comelec agreed with the findings of the provincial election supervisor of Eastern Samar that Jatulan has lost his residence in Sulat when he established his residence in Barangay San Guillermo, Morong, Rizal where he registered as a voter since June 22, 1997 and had voted therein in all national and local elections since then.



SSS Gives People Security and Hope for their Future

Forty-six (46) years since its establishment, the SSS continues to offer its members extensive benefits that provide stability and protection for the future.

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

Since 1957, the Social Security System (SSS) has been giving hope and meaningful social security to Filipino workers and their beneficiaries. Hope through the extension of benefits to members who become sick or disabled and become temporarily unable to meet the financial needs of their families. Security through programs that assist families when a breadwinner retires or passes away.

GROWING MEMBERSHIP

Over the years, membership in the SSS has grown to encompass worker groups such as: farmers and fishermen; household helpers; overseas contract workers; self-employed persons and professionals; workers in the informal sector; and non-working spouses of SSS members.

In 2003, some 896,000 workers registered with the SSS, bringing the total membership to 25.1 million. Around 48,032 new employers also registered with SSS, bringing the total number of employers to 702,574. The SSS continued to extend its service to overseas Filipino workers with the enrollment in 2003 of 69,371 OFWs. This brought the total number of OFW-members to 525,161, who are serviced by 17 SSS foreign representative offices all around the world.

INCREASED BENEFITS

From 1957 to end-2003, the SSS has helped more than 23.6 million members and their families by releasing over P332.50 billion in sickness, maternity, disability, retirement and death benefits.

BENEFITS	As of December 2003
Average Pension	P2,510 per month
Minimum Death and Disability Pension	P1,000 per month
Minimum Retirement Pension	P1,200 per month (for members with at least 10 credited years of service) P2,400 per month (for members with 20 or more credited years of service)
Maximum Retirement Pension	P14,581 per month
Maximum Funeral Grant	P20,000
Maximum Maternity Benefits	P39,000
Maximum Sickness Allowance	P450 per day

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SSS
Providing Filipinos with a foundation on which to build their tomorrow.

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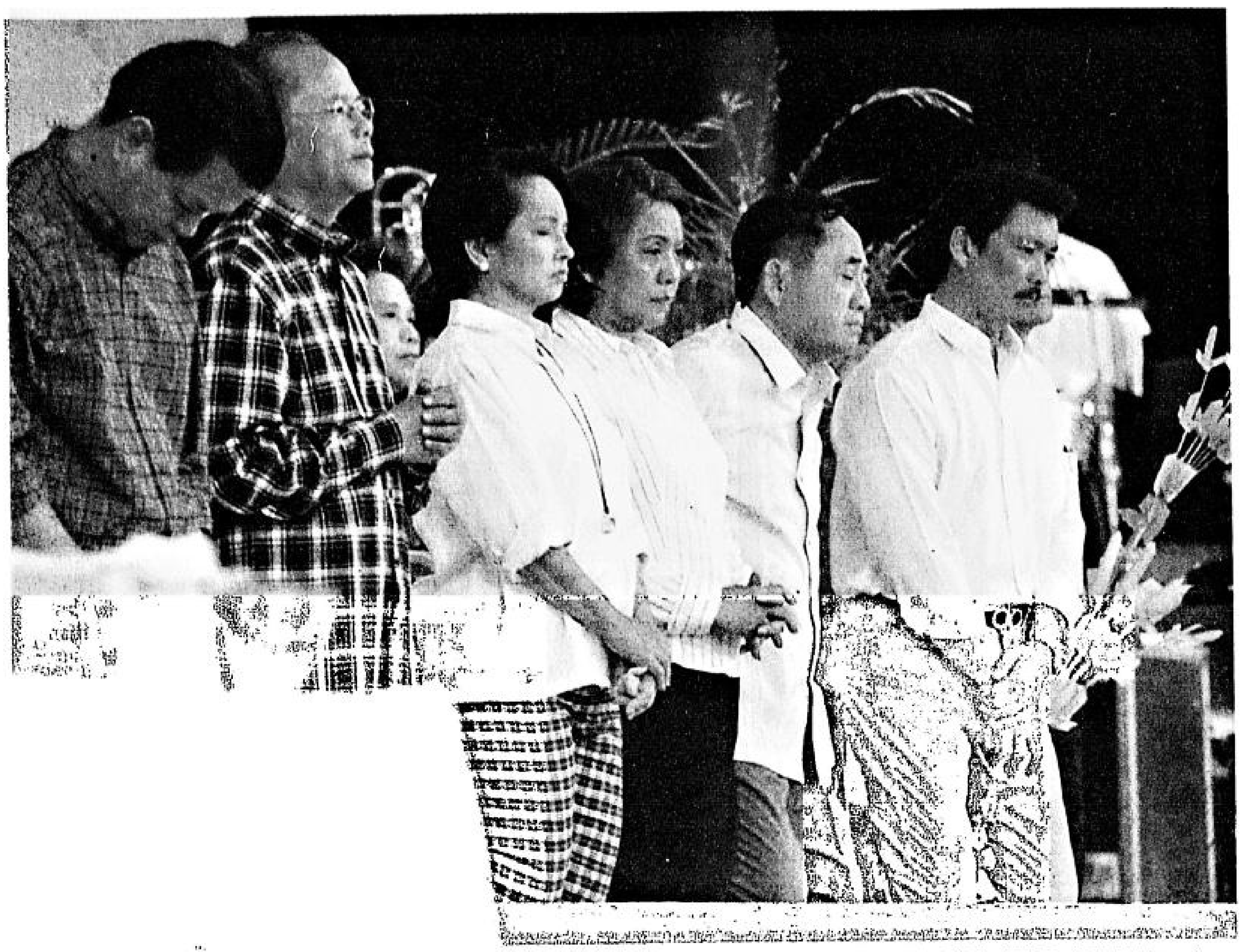


NATIONAL candidates of the K-4 coalition led by President Macapagal join Bro. Mike Velarde, leader of the El Shaddai Catholic Ministry, in an early morning Mass on Palm Sunday at the Amvel Business Park in San Dionisio, Parañaque City. Members of the charismatic group are said to be a potential voting bloc in elections.

VAL HANDUMON

GMA aide wants CPP 'fronts' out

From page A1

advocating violence."

In the case of Ocampo, the national security adviser said the former NDF negotiator "never urged the NPA rebels to lay down their arms and take the democratic path to achieve their cause.

"Not once did he renounce the use of violence and armed struggle," Gonzales said.

Not illegal

Ocampo, president of Bayan Muna, said he had not personally denounced the use of violence by communist rebels because "that is not required by the Comelec."

He challenged Gonzales to validate his recommendation to disqualify the party-list groups.

Ocampo said Gonzales would have to define what he meant by the six party-list groups being fronts of the CPP-NPA-NDF.

"The CPP is not an illegal organization now with the repeal in 1992 of the Anti-Subversion Law," he said. Besides, he added, being tagged a communist front was not a criterion for disqualification based on Comelec rules.

The lawmaker also said that based on Bayan Muna declarations before the Comelec, the party-list group vowed not to use violent means to pursue its political goals.

Aina Silverio, media officer of Anakpawis, dared Gonzales to prove his claim that their group was a communist front and that they had given funds to rebels.

"Gonzales has no right to question the legitimacy of Anakpawis and its sister party-list groups," Silverio said. "We went through the entire legal process to be accredited with the Comelec."

Silverio said her group was prepared to contest the allegations before any court.

NPA anniversary

Gonzales noted that on March 29, the founding anniversary of the NPA, the CPP Central Committee "confidently predicted that progressive parties and candidates would corner a significant percentage of votes in the May elections," referring to the six left-leaning party-list groups.

He also pointed out that exiled CPP founding chair Jose Ma. Sison had "openly claimed that the party-list organization Bayan Muna, along with several militant organizations, was a front organization of the CPP."

The national security adviser recalled that the Aquino and Ramos administrations had paved the way for the participation of the CPP and its allied organizations in the country's mainstream political life, particularly their involvement in party-list elections.

Under the Constitution, 20 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives are set aside for sectoral and party-list groups.

"Today, three years after three party-list representatives identified with the extreme Left won seats in Congress, it is time to reflect on whether the government is nearing the realization of such a vision," Gonzales said.

"While they are seeking more seats in Congress and taking advantage of government funds, we do not see a corresponding decline in the number of armed activities of the NPA, nor have we seen respite from the united front work in the streets openly calling for the overthrow of the government," he said.

Roy Anunciacon, Migrante secretary general, said "this is clear harassment. It's Marcosian and shows the desperation of Gloria (President Macapagal)."

Anunciacon expressed fears of a fresh wave of military and paramilitary attacks following the labeling as communist of party-list groups by Gonzales.

Campaign fees

As part of its fund-raising campaign, the NPA is collecting permit-to-campaign (PTC) fees from politicians wanting to campaign in rebel-controlled territories.

Ocampo earlier said the NPA would not press Bayan Muna into paying the PTC fees because it "understands that we could not afford to pay."

In his presentation, Gonzales made no mention of other party-list groups identified with breakaway factions of the CPP.

At present, there are two congressional representatives of Sanlakas and Partido ng Manggagawa, which are identified with the "rejectionist" faction of the late labor leader Filemon "Ka Popoy" Lagman.

Akbayan, a party-list group identified with another splinter faction of the CPP, has two representatives.

The CPP splintered in the early 1990s over differences on how to pursue Asia's longest-running communist insurgency, which is now on its 35th year.

Sale of gov't power plants can avert crisis—GMA

From page A1

"The President is doing everything to see to it that the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) is implemented," Bunye said.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, chair of the Private Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., said a number of multinational groups and power firms had shown keen interest in acquiring the power generation assets of Napocor.

Amatong noted that the Napocor board had already approved the sale of five state-owned power plants and that more deals were expected to be closed within the next few months.

Maynilad deal

Fears of a "sweetheart" deal were not limited to the arrangement between Meralco and Lopez-owned generation plants.

Consumer groups and critics of the administration had described the compromise agreement between the government and the Lopezes over the cash-strapped Maynilad Water Services Inc. as another such deal.

But Sen. Joker Arroyo yesterday said politics was behind the "big fuss" over the government's bid to take over Maynilad.

Arroyo said the Maynilad issue was simply "an effective but gutter campaign issue" in this election season. He noted that the financial woes of the Lopez-owned water utility firm were smaller compared to the bailout of certain government corporations by previous administrations.

The Lopezes are writing off their investments in Maynilad after the utility suffered huge losses due largely to the sharp peso devaluation that increased its dollar-denominated debts and to government failure to deliver on its promises. Because of the losses, Maynilad failed to pay some P8 billion in concession fees (debt service), which the government had to shoulder.

In what could be a surprise birthday gift to Ms Macapagal, who turns 57 today, Senator Arroyo, the President's most vocal critic in the Senate, defended the administration's intervention in Maynilad.

"The solution of the government to the Maynilad problem is actually a lot better than the government policy and practice whenever it is confronted with the financial problems of government corporations," the senator said in a statement.

This is because taxpayers continue to pay for the losses of certain government corporations that the national government had assumed, according to Arroyo.

Behest loans

He mentioned the Philippine National Bank (PNB) and Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), which had been saddled with behest loans amounting to P126 billion, thanks to cronies of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Arroyo said the Aquino administration cleaned up the books of the two government financial institutions and transferred their bad debts to the national government through the Asset Privatization Trust.

"Thus, while we had a new and spanking PNB and DBP, rid of its debts, the taxpayers assumed the P126 billion in crony loans," the senator said. "We are still paying for them bit by bit up to the present."

And these two cases, he said, started the "cycle" by which the government would come in and bail out government corporations with financial woes.

Central Bank losses

Arroyo said the government continued this practice of assuming the losses of government corporations when the administration of President Fidel Ramos assumed the Central Bank's accumulated losses of P302 billion. This is being repeated in the Macapagal administration's plan to privatize Napocor. Taxpayers will assume Napocor's debts of between P220 billion and P300 billion after its assets are sold.

At stake in Maynilad is around P5 billion to P10 billion, Arroyo said.

"Compared to the P126 billion in Marcos cronies' behest loans, the P302-billion Central Bank bailout and Napocor's P550 billion in power sector debts, Maynilad's P10 billion is miniscule," the senator said.

He said the Maynilad rehabilitation "is being discussed with such intensity and hullabaloo that did not attend the behest loans, the CB bailout and the Napocor controversies before it."

De Castro

He said the Maynilad issue generated much controversy because of talk that Ms Macapagal had entered into a "sweetheart deal" with the Lopezes in exchange for Sen. Noli de Castro agreeing to be Ms Macapagal's running mate.

De Castro, a broadcast journalist, is a talent of another Lopez-owned firm ABS-CBN.

Calling the alleged sweetheart deal "absolutely nonsense," Arroyo said that De Castro "did not need a *padrino* to run for any position" because the latter clearly had strong drawing power.

De Castro topped the 2001 senatorial election and had led surveys for presidential and vice presidential candidates.

"Neither would he allow the insult of being treated like chattel being bartered in a political auction," Arroyo said of De Castro. *Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Christine O. Avendaño*

Student facing theft raps commits suicide

From page A1

ket, twisted it into a noose, and hanged himself from the spiral staircase of his family's two-story house in Palo, Leyte.

Described by his family as bubbly and full of life, Yancy was to have appeared later that morning before the disciplinary committee of the Philippine Science High School (PSHS) in Palo to answer accusations that he had stolen P200 from the class fund.

He denied the allegation but found it shameful that he would be accused of such a crime.

"Sorry if I was not one of the best in your class. I did not steal any amount from anybody. *Kahit nagpakamatay ako, di ako guilty* (Even if I killed myself, I am not guilty)! Sorry! For all the troubles I have caused," the second year PSHS student said in a suicide note.

The note, in his own hand, was addressed to "all my teachers."

His family described Engle as a boy with a bright future, who loved to sing and was not stingy with his affections.

His parents and relatives were inconsolable and angry, blaming the school for his death.

They clamored for justice when they buried Yancy in the public cemetery on Thursday.

"We want justice ... he was a victim of their school's harsh system," said his father Lyndon, 39.

Lyndon has been working in a fast-food chain in Bahrain for 12 years. He came home on March 28, four days after the suicide of his eldest son.

George Roca, uncle of Yancy, said the family was seriously considering taking legal action against school officials, led by its director Pedrito Padilla.

"But we don't know yet what particular case the family would file against them," he said.

Sudden twist

Yancy was described by relatives and friends as loving and affectionate, a doting *kuya* to his two younger siblings—JM, 12, and Jade, 2.

But his life took a sudden twist on March 4 when he was accused of filching the P200 from the class locker.

Class treasurer Ma. Leah Borines filed the complaint against Yancy and asked that the Student Disciplinary Tribunal investigate the incident. She identified two witnesses to the alleged theft.

In a March 22 letter, discipline committee chair Zenaida Linasa officially advised Yancy that a complaint had been lodged "against you for an incidence of theft" and asked him to appear before the committee "for a conference" on March 24.

"You may seek the help of a legal counsel/lawyer during the meeting or you may waive this right in writing," Linasa wrote.

Seven hours before the scheduled "conference," Yancy took his life.

Juliet Engle, 40, said the allegation drove her son to kill himself.

'Letter frightened him'

"At his tender age, he could not bear the thought that he was accused of stealing money," Juliet told the INQUIRER, trying to suppress her tears. "He told me he was ostracized by his classmates. They taunted him."

She said Linasa's letter had frightened Yancy, especially when he was asked to bring along a lawyer.

"A boy of his age, who would be asked to have a lawyer with him, would think that he committed a very grave offense. And the amount involved was just P200."

Juliet recalled her son as being happy the night before he killed himself.

"He even volunteered to put his younger sister Jade to sleep," she said.

Director Padilla found it "unfair" that Yancy's family would blame the school.

"I am deeply hurt," he said, referring to the allegation that the school's "harsh system" drove the boy to suicide.

Padilla maintained the school applied a "careful process" in evaluating the accusation against Yancy, adding that the eight branches of PSHS in the country followed the same regulations in handling complaints against their students.

Under the school manual, the offense ascribed to the boy falls under the "major category" of offenses a student might commit on the campus.

Don't cry

Yancy, he explained, was given the option of bringing a lawyer to the discipline committee conference to help him understand the accusation against him.

"We are dealing here with a minor," Padilla said. "That is why, together with his parents, we require the presence of a lawyer, which can even be waived if they desire."

"Our motto is better to save than condemn," he added.

Padilla said the school tried to settle the case on the class level. When Yancy denied the accusation, the case was elevated to the school's disciplinary officer Efren Mendoza, who ruled on March 17 that there was "prima facie evidence" against the boy.

"My decision was based on the evidences and testimonies adduced during our conference," Mendoza said.

He then forwarded his findings to the school's committee on discipline.

In his suicide note, Yancy suggested death was the price he chose to pay to prove his innocence.

He had a postscript in his note:

"To Leyzabelle & Meryl & Ashley, whatever it is you hear about my family, don't cry."

"HE was a very loving son" was how Juliet Engle described her eldest son Yancy. This photo was taken in November last year in the student's bedroom.

CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

Clean Water Act Signed

Recognizing the need for sustainable access to clean water, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed Republic Act 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act on March 22, 2004 which is celebrated worldwide as World Water Day.

"Water is a basic necessity of life….. Commitments and actions are necessary to achieve the Millenium Development Goal to halve the number of people living without safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. To do this, we must always strive to develop policies that allow for the efficient and equitable use of water," said the President in her message during the National Water Forum.

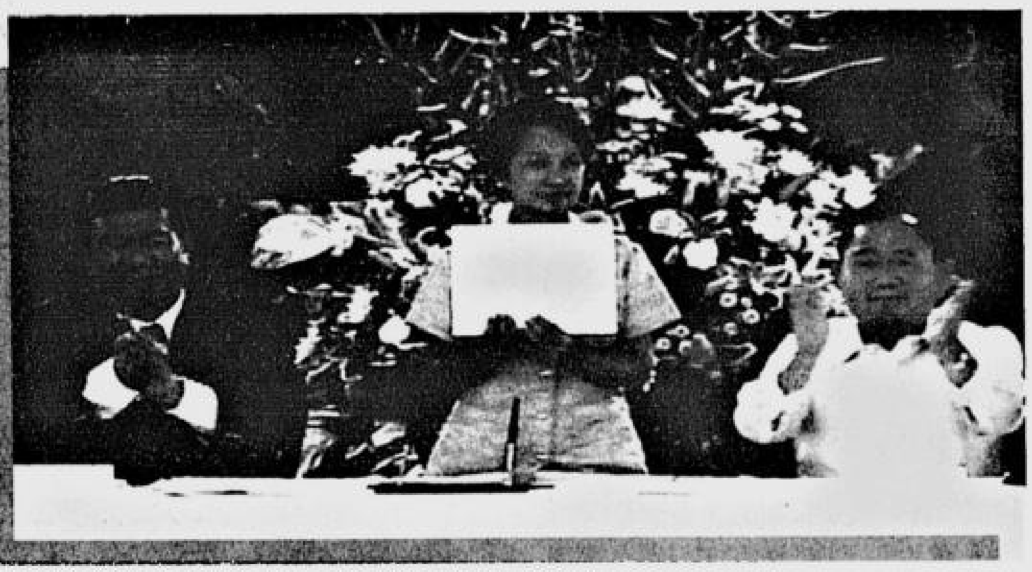
The principal authors of the law are Senator Robert Jaworski, chairman of the Senate committee on environment and natural resources and Congressman Augusto Baculio, chairman of the House committee on ecology. Co-authors include Senators John Osmeña, Manuel Villar, Ralph Recto, Juan Flavier, the late Renato Cayetano and Representatives Nerius Acosta, Juan Miguel Zubiri, Edmundo Reyes, Maite Defensor, and Carlos Cojuangco.

Members of civil society lauded the passage of the landmark environmental legislation that provides for a comprehensive water management program to protect the country's water bodies from all sources of pollution.

DENR Secretary Elisea G. Gozun said that the growing need for sustainable access to clean and adequate water prompted the government to find efficient means to protect and conserve the country's water resources.

The Clean Water Act provides a comprehensive strategy to address the degradation of our water bodies. It mandates the Department to formulate and implement more stringent policies and strengthen partnerships with other stakeholders to improve water quality in all parts of the country. It also encourages pollution prevention and waste minimization at source and provides for the use of economic incentives and public disclosure to ensure compliance.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signs the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 (RA 9275) with government officials and representatives of the civil society. With the President are (first row, from left): Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Senate President Franklin Drilon, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, and Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzales. Second row, from left are: Fr. Ben Beltran, Metodio Palaypay, Rep. Joey Solis, Imelda Sarmiento, DENR Secretary Elisea G. Gozun, Sen. Robert Jaworski (principal author-Senate), Rep. Augusto Baculio (principal author-House of Representatives), Rep. Edmundo Reyes and Rep. Nerius Acosta (co-authors), Odette Alcantara, Mimi Sison, Inday Berroya, and Toby Tañada.



President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presents the signed Philippine Clean Water Act (Republic Act No. 9275) during the ceremonial signing held at Kalayaan Hall in Malacanang in time for the celebration of the World Water Day.

What You Should Know About the Clean Water Act

Why the need for the Clean Water Act?

As early as 1996, monitoring of the country's rivers showed that only 51% of the classified rivers still met the standards for their most beneficial use. The rest were already polluted from domestic, industrial an agricultural sources.

Most studies point to the fact that domestic wastewater is the principal cause of organic pollution (at 48%) of our water bodies. Yet, only 3% of investments in water supply and sanitation were going to sanitation and sewage treatment.

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All sources of sewage and septage are required to comply with the law.

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Anyone discharging wastewater into a water body will have to pay a **wastewater charge**. This economic instrument which will be developed in consultation with all concerned stakeholders is expected to encourage investments in cleaner production and pollution control technologies to reduce the amount of pollutants generated and discharged.

Effluent trading per management area will also be allowed.

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What safeguards are provided for?

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What are the prohibited acts under R.A. 9275?

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- Operating facilities that discharge regulated water pollutants without the valid required permits

- Disposal of potentially infectious medical waste into sea by vessels

- Unauthorized transport or dumping into waters of sewage sludge or solid waste

- Transport, dumping or discharge of prohibited chemicals, substances or pollutants listed under Toxic Chemicals, Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act (R.A. No. 6969)

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In cases of gross violation, a fine of not less than Php500,000 but not more than Php3,000,000 will be imposed for each day of violation. Criminal charges may also be filed.

Who should implement the Clean Water Act?

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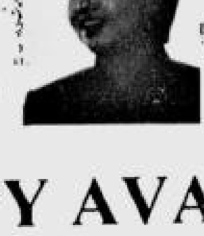

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

Clean Water Act Signed

Recognizing the need for sustainable access to clean water, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed Republic Act 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act on March 22, 2004 which is celebrated worldwide as World Water Day.

"Water is a basic necessity of life..... Commitments and actions are necessary to achieve the Millenium Development Goal to halve the number of people living without safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. To do this, we must always strive to develop policies that allow for the efficient and equitable use of water," said the President in her message during the National Water Forum.

The principal authors of the law are Senator Robert Jaworski, chairman of the Senate committee on environment and natural resources and Congressman Augusto Baculio, chairman of the House committee on ecology. Co-authors include Senators John Osmeña, Manuel Villar, Ralph Recto, Juan Flavier, the late Renato Cayetano and Representatives Nerius Acosta, Juan Miguel Zubiri, Edmundo Reyes, Maite Defensor, and Carlos Cojuangco.

Members of civil society lauded the passage of the landmark environmental legislation that provides for a comprehensive water management program to protect the country's water bodies from all sources of pollution.

DENR Secretary Elisea G. Gozun said that the growing need for sustainable access to clean and adequate water prompted the government to find efficient means to protect and conserve the country's water resources.

The Clean Water Act provides a comprehensive strategy to address the degradation of our water bodies. It mandates the Department to formulate and implement more stringent policies and strengthen partnerships with other stakeholders to improve water quality in all parts of the country. It also encourages pollution prevention and waste minimization at source and provides for the use of economic incentives and public disclosure to ensure compliance.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signs the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 (RA 9275) with government officials and representatives of the civil society. With the President are (first row, from left): Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Senate President Franklin Drilon, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, and Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzales. Second row, from left are: Fr. Ben Beltran, Metodio Palaypay, Rep. Joey Solis, Imelda Sarmiento, DENR Secretary Elisea G. Gozun, Sen. Robert Jaworski (principal author-Senate), Rep. Augusto Baculio (principal author-House of Representatives), Rep. Edmundo Reyes and Rep. Nerius Acosta (co-authors), Odette Alcantara, Mimi Sison, Inday Berroya, and Toby Tañada.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presents the signed Philippine Clean Water Act (Republic Act No. 9275) during the ceremonial signing held at Kalayaan Hall in Malacanang in time for the celebration of the World Water Day.

What You Should Know About the Clean Water Act

Why the need for the Clean Water Act?

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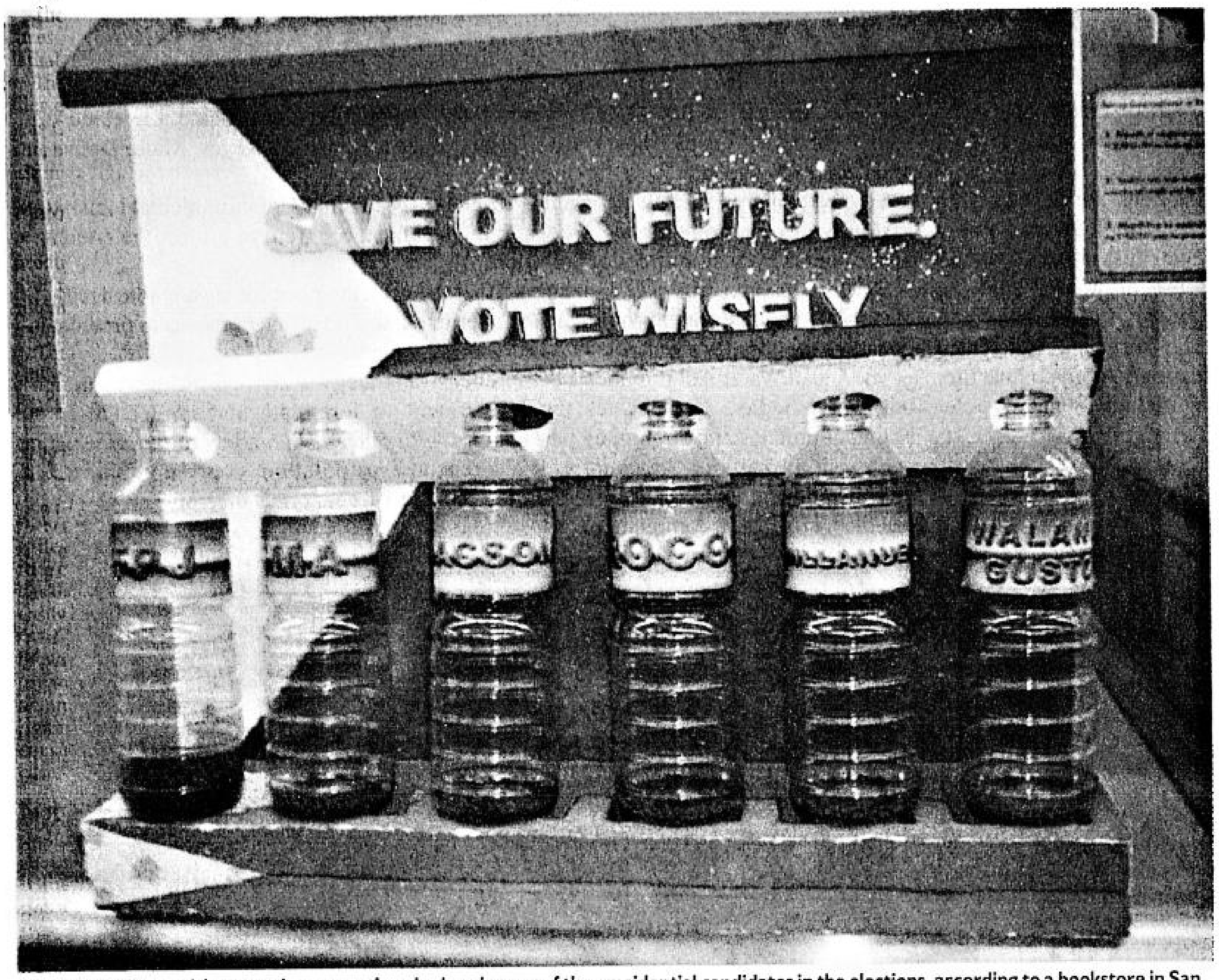

ALL BOTTLED up with mongo beans are the winning chances of the presidential candidates in the elections, according to a bookstore in San Jose City in vote-rich Nueva Ecija.

ANSELMO S. ROQUE/PDI CENTRAL LUZON DESK

Who's ahead? Ask the mongo ...

From page A1

Here is how Pandayan Bookshop, on the second floor of a popular supermarket here, does it the Novo Ecijano way:

Shoppers are given a mongo bean each and are asked to drop it into any of the five empty mineral water bottles placed on a Styropor slab at the entrance to the shop.

Each bottle bears the name of a particular candidate—one is marked FPJ, another GMA, one has Lacson's name on it, the fourth is labeled Roco, and the fifth is marked Villanueva, for Brother Eddie.

A sixth bottle carries the label, "*Walang gusto*," or "none of the above."

"Save our future, vote wisely," reads a sign above the bottles.

Brains behind the beans

"We will not count the seeds," Michelle Mendoza, assistant branch manager of the bookshop, told the INQUIRER. "They are there for the public to discern who among the candidates are getting (the most number of) mungbean seeds."

People will know who is leading the survey simply by gauging the height of the pile of beans inside each 500-ml bottle.

The unique survey began on March 15 and will continue until the eve of the elections.

The idea to use beans was conceived by bookshop owner Gerardo Cabochan, who is based in Metro Manila.

Mendoza said similar surveys were being conducted in the store's 13 other branches in Bulacan, Rizal, Metro Manila and in another city in Nueva Ecija.

Most of the "respondents," so far, have been customers of Pandayan, including professionals, students and parents from San Jose and nearby towns of Nueva Ecija and Pangasinan.

Mendoza said most customers given the beans happily take them and drop them into their chosen bottles.

But some decline.

FPJ country

"I don't want people to know whom I will be voting for," said one male teacher, who refused to accept the bean offered him.

Another customer giggled: "This is so amusing."

To avoid cheating—such as a customer dropping several "unofficial beans" into the bottle of his preferred candidate—a security guard has been assigned as watchdog to monitor the "polls."

"*Talagang nakakalamang si FPJ sa Nueva Ecija* (FPJ is really leading in Nueva Ecija)," one shopper said on seeing the heap of beans inside the bottle bearing movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s name.

The pile of beans for Poe has crept up to a height about one-eighth of the bottle. Roco's beans measure about one-twelfth of his bottle.

Those for President Macapagal-Arroyo, Lacson and Villanueva measure even less—about the same level as the beans in the bottle marked "*Walang gusto*."

Shabu lab turned into rehab unit

From page A1

al Edgar Aglipay, the police anti-drug czar, said.

"Good thing the house can finally serve a good purpose."

Police estimate the total illegal drugs trade in the Philippines to amount to P200 billion—or one-fourth of the national budget.

The drug trafficking charge Dy faces is punishable by death by lethal injection.

The last known narcotics peddler executed in the Philippines was Chinese Lim Seng, who was shot by firing squad in public during martial law 31 years ago.

Major transshipment point

So massive is the illegal drugs production that syndicates have used the country as a major transshipment point for users in Asia, including China and Taiwan.

The Tanza mansion will be officially inaugurated this morning by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and other top Philippine National Police officials.

The place will be run by experts trained at the Center for the Ultimate Rehabilitation of Drug Dependents (CURRED), the PNP-managed rehabilitation center in Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila.

It will later be turned over to the Department of Health, the primary government agency mandated to manage rehabilitation centers.

At Tanza, Aglipay said drug patients would go through a rehabilitation program for at least six months.

The conversion of Dy's mansion marks the first time that a property seized from drug suspects is turned into a rehabilitation center.

GMA's war

Aglipay said that no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo thought of this policy as part of the government's war against drug trafficking.

The war has reaped results.

The 41-year-old Dy not only lost his Tanza mansion, he also lost his Jaguar sedan, yacht, speedboat, fishing boat and jet skis, which were forfeited in favor of the government following his arrest in Manila on July 25, 2003.

The Jaguar was found during the July 26 raid on Dy's supposed safe house at Lancaster Townhomes in Pasay City, where police reportedly seized P3.6 billion worth of ephedrine, a key ingredient in the manufacture of shabu.

And instead of staying in a mansion, Dy now lives at a maximum security detention center in Camp Crame, which he shares with captured Abu Sayyaf bandits and suspected kidnappers and murderers.

Boats loaded with drugs

Dy's men allegedly used the boats and jet skis to ferry banned substances in and out of the Tanza resort mansion.

Dy was also the alleged owner of the shabu "packaging center" at the Marina Bay Homes in Parañaque City which authorities raided on July 28, 2003.

From the townhouse, police seized 400 kilos of shabu and 1.2 tons of ephedrine, all worth at least P1 billion.

Aglipay said the government was now in the process of seizing pieces of property taken from other drug suspects.

But even with the transformation of Dy's mansion, Aglipay said the new rehabilitation center was not enough to offset the lack of rehabilitation facilities.

There are only around 60 private and government-run rehabilitation centers to accommodate an estimated 1.8 million drug users nationwide, he said.

Malaysia rejects US military help

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia on Sunday rejected military help from the United States to flush out terrorists in the Straits of Malacca.

"In principle, ensuring security in the Straits of Malacca is the responsibility of Malaysia and Indonesia, and for the present, we do not propose to invite the United States to join the security operations we have mounted there," Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Najib Razak was quoted as saying by the Bernama news agency.

The top US military commander in the Asia-Pacific region, Adm. Thomas Fargo, said that the US planned to deploy US forces along the narrow straits straddling Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia as part of Washington's new counterterrorism initiative to help Southeast Asia.

"Even if they wished to act they should get our permission as this touches on the question of our national sovereignty," Najib said. "They can use the waterway for their ships including warships but to launch operations, they should have the concurrence of Malaysia and Indonesia."

Malaysia is holding some 80 suspected terrorists, many of whom are allegedly members of Jemaah Islamiyah, under its harsh Internal Security Act that allows for detention without trial. *AFP*

US plans to deploy Marines in region

From page A1

row straits straddling Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia is part of Washington's new counterterrorism initiative to help Southeast Asia, said Admiral Thomas Fargo, the top US military commander in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Regional Maritime Security Initiative is being devised by the US military to combat transnational threats like terrorism, piracy, nuclear proliferation, human trafficking and drugs smuggling.

The initiative seeks to promote sharing of information and intelligence that puts standing operating procedures in place with Southeast Asian countries for effective action against terrorists and other criminals, Fargo said.

Widespread support

"There is very large, widespread support for this initiative," said Fargo, who heads the Hawaii-based US Pacific Command that directs Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force operations across the vast region.

"I just came back from Singapore and had a very solid conversation with the Singaporeans, and they're going to help us with this," he told US legislators who quizzed him this week on budget allocations for his command, the largest in the United States.

Asked whether the Pacific Command had adequate resources to implement the initiative, Fargo said that while previous mechanisms used in the war on illegal drugs would be relied upon, new approaches were being considered.

"You know, we're looking at things like high-speed vessels, putting special operations forces on high-speed vessels, putting Marines on high-speed vessels so that we can use boats that might be incorporated with these vessels to conduct effective interdiction," he explained.

He did not discuss specific plans. The Philippines is the only country in Southeast Asia where hundreds of American troops are stationed to train local soldiers in battling terrorists in Mindanao.

Vast space

On whether Malaysia and Indonesia would extend cooperation to the US initiative, Fargo said: "I expect a broad range of support.

"All of the countries are concerned about the transnational threat. This is a pretty vast space and no country can do this by themselves. So it's going to be a multinational, mutilateral effort, if you will, to deal with this particular problem."

Fargo cited India as one of the first countries that provided patrols along the Straits of Malacca immediately after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States.

Southeast Asian waters, particularly in the Straits of Malacca near the Indonesian side, are the world's most pirate-infested region. More than a quarter of the world's trade and oil transits the straits.

Al-Qaida threat

Southeast Asia is also home to the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the regional chapter of the al-Qaida terror network accused of deadly bomb attacks in Indonesia and the Philippines.

There are numerous other groups in the region that have been branded terrorist by the United States and local governments, including the Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group in Mindanao.

Fargo said Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines had arrested more than 200 JI members, while Indonesia had prosecuted 34 JI members involved in the deadly Bali bombings, most of whom had been sentenced for their crimes.

Fargo said Southeast Asia was a "crucial front" in the US war on terrorism.

"Destabilization of the governments of this region, moderate, secular and legitimately elected, and with large Muslim populations, would result in decades of danger and chaos," he said. *AFP*

Poe outbursts show potential for abuse of power

From page A1

gaffes—like that incident with the reporter—that can generate a backlash in public opinion and easily tilt the balance either way.

As to backlash, it is already brewing in the media as media organizations close ranks to condemn Poe's arrogance. Poe and Aguinaldo are reported to have considered the incident a "closed case."

Not closed

But the incident was seen by thousands on TV. As far as the witnesses are concerned, it is not a closed case. The incident was a revelation. People may not easily forget Poe's roughneck behavior, which may have left a strong impression on how the actor copes with pressure. The public was given a glimpse of Poe's vulnerability when confronted by crisis.

For many in the media, Poe's outburst is ominous. The incident revealed a high-handed Poe and a potential to abuse power. The incident foreshadows stormy media relations with Poe if he wins the election.

Poe's instinctive hostility toward the media has been manifested on many occasions, but highlighted by his recent encounters with Aguinaldo and the Reuters photographer.

The media have been critical of Ms Macapagal over her short temper or petulance. She dresses down journalists whose questions irritate her. The short fuse of Raul Roco is legendary and has not escaped media's scrutiny.

Both Ms Macapagal and Roco have learned to live with the constant needling of media. Probably because of their long experience in the rough and tumble relationship between public figures and the media, Ms Macapagal and Roco have accepted media as part of political life and have taken media scrutiny in stride. And the media have learned to take presidential tongue-lashings as part of the game.

But Poe's outbursts are entirely of a different sort. They reveal a thuggish mentality in which he is quick with his hands and he cuts out an exchange of information.

Poe seems to think of the press as an enemy, not as a medium through which he could communicate his ideas to the public and through which he could be asked to explain his political platform. He avoids debates. He shuns engagement with the press and an exchange of ideas.

Like a thug

For a candidate seeking high public office, Poe behaves like a thug. He surrounds himself with tough-looking bodyguards who plow into crowds and block them and media from crowding around him.

Media should have a good reason to be worried about Poe. The incident gives an early warning that it's dangerous to trust him with power.

Poe has already displayed symptoms of being rough to them. Covering Poe's campaign poses risks and injury to reporters. They can be hurt physically and they should expect to be abused if they ask too many embarrassing questions.

There is a certain mystique in the relations between the media and officials—especially the president of this country. These relations are symbiotic.

The press is the medium through which the president can communicate with the people, explain his policies and win wide public support for them. The media have to ask questions all the time and have to be ubiquitous to seek explanation for policies. In a democracy, there is no other medium that an official and the president can use to forge a national consensus.

Poe has enlisted a number of experts in his team of advisers, and if there is an area where he needs immediate advice, it is not on the economy but on how he can have a good working relationship with the press.

Poe is starting on the wrong foot. Even though he is not yet certain of being elected, he has already started to antagonize the media. This is what is worrisome about Poe. His campaign behavior portends a running war between him and the media that can only worsen if he wins.

Rod Reyes

Even in Poe's camp, all is not well among the actor's media team. Rod Reyes is in the wrong company. Poe has too many media spokespersons who include Reyes, Rep. Francis Escudero and Sen. Vicente Sotto III.

Each has his own approach. Reyes is low key. While he covers up for the deficiencies of his employer, he likes to stick to facts and does not give the media false spins.

Others in the media team, however, don't approve of Reyes' approach. They blame him for Poe's bad press. This is not Reyes' fault.

As a spokesperson, Reyes explains Poe's policies the way he wants them presented—such as the statement that Poe was considering debt restructuring as a way to solve the fiscal deficit. Debt restructuring alarmed the business community which associated it with defaulting on debt payments.

This phrase "debt restructuring" was put into Poe's head by his economic advisers. Whether Poe understood its implication we don't know.

Reyes' main problem is Poe himself. It is Poe who projects his public image by avoiding a debate, uttering words he hardly understands, and bullying the media covering him.

If Reyes quits the Poe camp, his replacement cannot reinvent Poe for what he is not. It is Poe who defines his own relationship with media and draws his own image.

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OUR FUTURE
VOTE WISELY
WALANG GUSTO

ALL BOTTLED up with mongo beans are the winning chances of the presidential candidates in the elections, according to a bookstore in San Jose City in vote-rich Nueva Ecija.

Who's ahead? Ask the mongo ...

From page A1

Here is how Pandayan Bookshop, on the second floor of a popular supermarket here, does it the Novo Ecijano way:

Shoppers are given a mongo bean each and are asked to drop it into any of the five empty mineral water bottles placed on a Styropor slab at the entrance to the shop.

Each bottle bears the name of a particular candidate—one is marked FPJ, another GMA, one has Lacson's name on it, the fourth is labeled Roco, and the fifth is marked Villanueva, for Brother Eddie.

A sixth bottle carries the label, "*Walang gusto*," or "none of the above."

"Save our future, vote wisely," reads a sign above the bottles.

Brains behind the beans

"We will not count the seeds," Michelle Mendoza, assistant branch manager of the bookshop, told the INQUIRER. "They are there for the public to discern who among the candidates are getting (the most number of) mungbean seeds."

People will know who is leading the survey simply by gauging the height of the pile of beans inside each 500-ml bottle.

The unique survey began on March 15 and will continue until the eve of the elections.

The idea to use beans was conceived by bookshop owner Gerardo Cabochan, who is based in Metro Manila.

Mendoza said similar surveys were being conducted in the store's 13 other branches in Bulacan, Rizal, Metro Manila and in another city in Nueva Ecija.

Most of the "respondents," so far, have been customers of Pandayan, including professionals, students and parents from San Jose and nearby towns of Nueva Ecija and Pangasinan.

Mendoza said most customers given the beans happily take them and drop them into their chosen bottles.

But some decline.

FPJ country

"I don't want people [illegible] whom I will be voting for," said one male teacher, who refused to accept the bean offered him.

Another customer

"Th [illegible] amu

To avoid cheati[illegible] customer dropping [illegible] ficial bean [illegible] into t[illegible] preferred [illegible] ndi[illegible] guard has bee[illegible] watche[illegible] mo[illegible]

"*Tah*[illegible] *Nu*[illegible] FPJ [illegible] Nueva Ec[illegible] op [illegible] inside the bottle [illegible] or Fer[illegible] nando Poe [illegible]

The pile of bea[illegible] up to [illegible] the bott[illegible] Ro[illegible] boat [illegible]

Tho[illegible] Arroyo [illegible] sur[illegible]

Widespread support

AI

Shabu lab turned into rehab unit

From page A1

al Edgar Aglipay, the police anti-drug czar, said.

"Good thing the house can finally serve a good purpose."

Police estimate the total illegal drugs trade in the Philippines to amount to P200 billion—or one-fourth of the national budget.

The drug trafficking charge Dy faces is punishable by death by lethal injection.

The last known narcotics peddler executed in the Philippines was Chinese Lim Seng, who was shot by firing squad in public during martial law 31 years ago.

Major transshipment point

So massive is the illegal drug production that syndicates have used the country as a major transshipment point for users in Asia, including China and Taiwan.

The Tanza mansion will be officially inaugurated this morning by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and other top Philippine National Police officials.

The place will be run by experts trained at the Center for the Ultimate Rehabilitation of Drug Dependents (CURRED), the PNP-managed rehabilitation center in Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila.

It will later be turned over to the Department of Health, the primary government agency mandated to manage rehabilitation centers.

At Tanza, Aglipay said drug patients would go through a rehabilitation program for at least six months.

The conversion of Dy's mansion marks the first time that property seized from drug suspects is turned into a rehabilitation center.

GMA's war

Aglipay said that no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo thought of this policy as part of the government's [illegible] va[illegible] drug trafficking.

The war has reaped results.

The 41-year-old Dy not [illegible] lost his Tanza mansion [illegible] lost his Jaguar sedan, yacht, speedboat, fishing boat and [illegible] skis, which were forfeited in favor of the government following [illegible] arrest in Manila on July 25, 200[illegible]

The Jaguar was found during the July 26 raid on Dy's supposed safe house at Lancaster Town homes in Pasay City, where police reportedly seized P3.6 billion worth of ephedrine, [illegible] ingredient in the manufacture of shabu.

And instead of stayi[illegible] mansion, Dy now [illegible] maximum security detention center [illegible] Camp Crame, which he shares with captured Abu Sayyaf bandits and suspected kidnappers and murderers.

Boats loaded with drugs

Dy's men allegedly used [illegible]

at [illegible] the [illegible] Dy [illegible] Ma[illegible] Pa[illegible] raidec[illegible]

From [illegible] 40[illegible] to [illegible] PH[illegible] ay [illegible] piece[illegible] othe[illegible]

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The [illegible] vate [illegible] bilitatic[illegible] em[illegible] date [illegible]

Poe outbursts show potential for abuse of power

From page A1

gaffes—like that incident with the reporter—that can generate a backlash in public opinion and easily tilt the balance either way.

As to backlash, it is already brewing in the media as media organizations close ranks to condemn Poe's arrogance. Poe and Aguinaldo are reported to have considered the incident a "closed case."

Not closed

But the incident was seen by thousands on TV. As far as the witnesses are concerned, it is not a closed case. The incident was a revelation. People may not easily forget Poe's roughneck behavior, which may have left a strong impression on how the actor copes with pressure. The public was given a glimpse of Poe's vulnerability when confronted by crisis.

For many in the media, Poe's outburst is ominous. The incident revealed a high-handed Poe and a potential to abuse power. The incident foreshadows stormy media relations with Poe if he wins the election.

Poe's instinctive hostility toward the media has been manifested on many occasions but highlighted by his recent encounters with Aguinaldo and the Reuters photographer.

The media have been critical of Ms Macapagal over her short temper or petulance. She dresses down journalists whose questions irritate her. The short fuse of Raul Roco is legendary and has not escaped media's scrutiny.

Both Ms Macapagal and Roco have learned to live with the constant needling of media. Probably because of their long experience in the rough and tumble relationship between public figures and the media, Ms Macapagal and Roco have accepted media as part of political life and have taken media scrutiny in stride. And the media have learned to take presidential tongue lashings as part of the game.

But Poe's outbursts are entirely of a different sort. They reveal a thuggish mentality in which he is quick with his hands and he cuts out an exchange of information.

Poe seems to think of the press as an enemy, not as a medium through which he could communicate his ideas to the public and through which he could be asked to explain his political platform. He avoids debates. He shuns engagement with the press and an exchange of ideas.

Like a thug

For a candidate seeking high public office, Poe behaves like a thug. He surrounds himself with tough-looking bodyguards who plow into crowds and block them and media from crowding around him.

Media should have a good reason to be worried about Poe. The incident gives an early warning that it's dangerous [illegible] with power.

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Po[illegible] at [illegible] xpert [illegible] and [illegible] neet

Rod Reyes

Ex[illegible] Re[illegible]

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Militant group starts endorsing candidates for May polls

WHILE religious groups are keeping candidates on the waiting-game, a militant organization yesterday started endorsing candidates.

The organization Bayan-Muna party list also promised to campaign for the candidates they would endorse.

Bayan-Muna drew up a list of the candidates they would endorse in a press conference. Topping the list is a political neophyte running for councilor in Marikina City.

Joy Alcantara, a doctor and a candidate for councilor in Marikina City, became the first candidate in the metropolis to be formally endorsed by Bayan Muna.

Bayan-Muna NCR chair Ed Clemente also told the INQUIRER they would soon endorse the reelection bid of Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte, who is running against former mayor Mel Mathay.

The group also has "close relationships" with Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, who is running for reelection against former mayor Mel Lopez, and Caloocan City Mayor Rey Malonzo, who is running for congressman against Susana Punzalan and Oscar Malapitan, Bayan-Muna NCR secretary general Froyen Yaneza said.

But he said they were "still open" to the two mayors' rivals.

The group would also formally endorse national candidates on April 21.

Clemente said the candidates they would choose for local and national posts could come from different political parties as long as they meet the following criteria: (1) willingness and conformity of taking urgent action and relief to the impoverished condition of the Filipinos, (2) keeping hold of clear programs and platforms of governance for the majority, and (3) untainted reputation.

He added that some candidates had sent letters and feelers to their group but the endorsements would still have to be deliberated upon by the group's members. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

No more new shoes for Jennifer now

By Edson Castro Tandoc Jr.

ALMOST a week ago, he promised his daughter he would buy her a new pair of shoes.

Now, all Sonny Boy Gallano wants is a decent burial for 4-year-old Jennifer.

A wayward bullet struck the girl during a shootout between five suspected kidnappers and agents of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force in Navotas last Thursday. Four of the suspects were also killed.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said her government was taking full responsibility for Jennifer's death and ordered police and the task force to review their "rules of engagement" to avoid similar tragedies.

The grieving father told the INQUIRER the family had no plans, for now, of filing a complaint against Naktf.

"There is nothing more we can do," Sonny Boy said in Tagalog. "But I hope they would help us give my daughter a decent burial."

Wild guns

Sonny said Jennifer was a "good daughter" who always kissed him when he came home from work.

Jennifer was playing with her 3-year-old brother inside their shanty in the crowded Road 10, North Bay Boulevard South last Thursday noon. They had just finished lunch when they heard gunshots.

A bullet ripped through their hovel and hit Jennifer in the belly.

JENNIFER'S mother Jonalyn grieves the death of her daughter. ERIK ARAZAS

The guns respected no one.

Bullets also struck a passing Nissan Vanette, hitting the driver in the shoulders. Shards of broken glass wounded the five children in the van.

A truck driver and a helper also sustained gunshot wounds.

Louie Javier, a 21-year-old porter who was being treated at the Tondo General Hospital for a gunshot wound in the leg, said he was sleeping inside his shanty 10 meters away from the Gallanos when he was awakened by gunshots.

He ran to their kitchen, where a stray bullet also hit him.

The shootout began when the five suspected members of the Allan Balimbingan kidnap-for-ransom group allegedly fired at the Naktf operatives who had flagged them down. Naktf reportedly had received a tip that the group would strike in Navotas.

Christopher Elizalde, 26, the only suspect who survived the shootout, has been transferred to the Armed Forces Medical Center for treatment, along with Lope Varela, 41, the van driver who was accidentally hit.

Naktf has promised financial help to all the victims.

Two of the four slain suspects have been identified.

Reynaldo Misa, the driver of the suspects' blue Mitsubishi sedan, was identified through his license.

No kisses anymore

The parents of Jennifer had a hard time claiming the body of their daughter. On Friday afternoon, the funeral parlor finally agreed to release her body.

Naktf has given the family P10,000 in financial support. Jennifer's mother, Jonalyn, said it was not enough to pay for the funeral services, which cost P14,000.

Her husband, jobless until two weeks ago, earns only P200 a day.

The family used to stay with Jonalyn's sister in Pasay City but when Sonny Boy got a job as a jeepney driver recently, they moved to Navotas and rented the shanty. That was when the father promised Jennifer a new pair of shoes.

Now, when he comes home, nobody will rush to Sonny Boy with a kiss anymore.

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'Pasyon' sound fills WPD halls

By Tarra Quismundo

THE HALLS that had seen possibly thousands of men and women tagged in crimes big and small yesterday reverberated with the sound of the traditional *pasyon*, filling the building's pathways and ceilings with the eerie sound of voices singing the tale of Jesus Christ's life and death.

Upon entrance at the Western Police District Headquarters on United Nations Avenue in Manila, one would be greeted by a small group of *pasyon* singers, faithfully rendering the *pasyon* even without an audience.

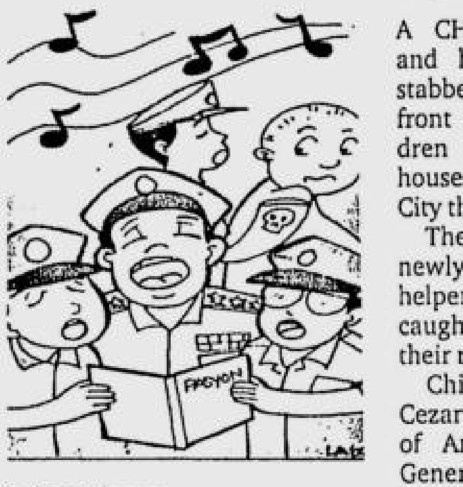
"It's a practice of the Filipino tradition, and the police also do it to repent for their sins as other people would," said WPD spokesperson Gerry Agunod.

On the same stage at the headquarters' lobby, where the WPD usually presents suspects in, for instance, robberies and murders, an altar and a few monoblock chairs were placed for the *pabasa* (pasyon reading).

The *pabasa* began yesterday, after the WPD began Holy Week with a Palm Sunday celebration at the St. Michael's chapel on the headquarters' 2nd floor.

Policemen and staff from stations, administrative section, district units, organizations of policemen's wives and police retirees, and staff of canteens inside the headquarters, took turns in reading the *pasyon* scheduled from 10 a.m to 12 midnight.

"To us Christians, Lent is an observation of the suffering of Christ, and many of us here are Catholics," said WPD Director Pedro Bulaong.



Bulaong would carry a cross along United Nations Avenue on April 9, Good Friday, to fulfill his yearly vow of repentance.

Cops' cross

"The police are like Jesus Christ. Christ was crucified, flagged and insulted only to save mankind. Same with the police. We are carrying the cross to save men from terrorist threats, disasters and crime," said Bulaong.

After carrying the cross through one station, Bulaong would pass the cross to his disciples: the WPD's officers and 11 station commanders. They would then carry the cross through 13 other stations around San Marcelino Street, UN Avenue and Taft Avenue.

On Easter Sunday, the WPD would hold a mass at their chapel, followed by the traditional egg hunting contest. The men of the WPD would not have holidays over Holy Week, and would stay in detail all over the city.

RMHS Batch '71 reunion set

MEMBERS of batch '71 of the Ramon Magsaysay High School in España, Manila, will hold a grand reunion dubbed "'71@50: A Gathering of Friends" on April 17, at the Camp Aguinaldo Officers Club. For details, please contact any of the following: Femna Tuparan-Deang at 921-9745 or 0917-6239300; Alex Arellano at 655-4287 or 0918-9193235; Fe Nano-Dyliacco at 645-8993 or 0916-4120462; Freddie Mercado at 783-6846 or 493-5378, or Arsenio "Bobit" Bautista at 749-8254 or 0919-6498572.

Couple stabbed to death by helper

A CHINESE trader and his wife were stabbed to death in front of their children inside their house in Caloocan City the other night.

The suspect: their newly hired store helper, whom they caught hiding inside their room.

Chinese national Cezar Pan, 48, owner of Ana and Cezar General Merchandise in Barangay 81, Caloocan City, died of a stab wound in his chest. His wife Ana, 45, sustained several stab wounds in the body.

The alleged killer, identified as Michael Gonzaga, is at large, police chief Benjardi Mantele said yesterday. Police could not yet ascertain if Gonzaga got anything from the house. Most of the drawers there had been forcibly opened.

Police said at 7:45 p.m. Saturday, Ana heard her husband yelling that there was a robber in their room. Ana and her two children, aged 9 and 4, rushed upstairs, where they saw the suspect stabbing her husband.

She tried to stop the suspect but Gonzaga stabbed her too.

The children ran to the third floor and tried to call for help but Gonzaga stopped them. He then fled without harming the children. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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(In exact order)

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Caloocan looks for fire hazards

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

CALOOCAN City businessmen must comply with fire safety requirements or risk closure of their shops.

The Caloocan Fire Station has formed two teams to inspect business establishments in the city for compliance with building and fire safety regulations.

Buildings that would be found deficient in fire safety measures would be recommended for temporary closure until the owner completes the safety requirements.

This developed as an hourlong fire razed a plywood factory in Alarcon Street, Malabo, Barangay Maysan, Valenzuela City. More than P8 million in property was lost, while three employees were injured.

Tanong ng Bayan
INQ TV
Ngayong Alas-10 Ng Gabi

Dapat na bang payagang mag-asawa si Father?

Sinumpaan nila ang pagtalikod sa buhay-sekswal. Hirit naman ng iba, sakal na ang kaparian sa kawalan ng kasal? Dapat na nga ba silang payagan? Mamayang alas-10 ng gabi, sa ABC.
(May replay bukas, alas-8 ng umaga.)

ABC

Chino Roces Ave. resurrected

By Margaux Ortiz

THE CHAOTIC image of Chino Roces Avenue in Makati City (above, left) is now but a past nightmare (right). RUDY ESPERAS

AS THE NATION began to commemorate the passion and death of Jesus Christ, Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo) jumped the gun and was resurrected.

For the first time in nearly two years, vehicles were again able to traverse the avenue through and through from JP Rizal in Barangay Olympia, Makati, to Edsa.

"The road project is already 100 percent finished," said Antonio Amiscaray, director of the Metro Manila Urban Transport Integration Project (MMURTRIP), under which the Chino Roces roadwork was done.

Work crews are currently putting the finishing touches on the project, he added.

Inauguration of the completed roadway has been set for April 16.

According to Amiscaray, they were able to comply with the March 31 deadline, which was reset several times due to various problems in the construction phase.

And now, things are a lot better.

"*Masaya ako, siyempre. Natapos na din ang pagsasakripisyo namin* (I'm happy because our sacrifices have ended)," said Lino Alibay, a jeepney driver.

Alibay, 59, battled with slow-moving traffic, income loss, and confusing rerouting schemes from the time work on Chino Roces began in June 2002.

The man who has plied the Chino Roces Avenue route for two decades, said the past two years tested his patience as a driver.

"*Sobrang lugi kami sa biyahe. Ubos ang krudo dahil sa sobrang traffic tapos wala pa silang ginawang maayos na traffic rerouting* (We were on the losing end for two years because of heavy traffic and chaotic rerouting schemes)," Alibay said in an interview.

Frances Ventura, a resident of Ponte Street, which crosses Chino Roces Avenue, was happy that the project has been completed as well.

"I don't have to wake up so early to go to my office on Pasong Tamo Extension (which is about four kilometers away)," Ventura said.

She added that for the past two years, the 20-minute ride from her house to the office was stretched to an hour.

"Our lives can go back to normal again," Ventura said.

Contractor R-II Builders initially promised to finish major parts of the project by Feb. 15 this year.

The MMURTRIP was a foreign-funded endeavor supervised by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Color coding lifted Wednesday until Good Friday

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday announced that the number coding scheme will be suspended beginning Wednesday for the Holy Week.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said over radio station dzBB that the lifting of the coding would be from Wednesday, a declared holiday, to Good Friday.

"Number coding is automatically suspended during official holidays," Vergel de Dios stressed.

The traffic chief reiterated their projection that traffic would turn for the worst on Holy Tuesday and Wednesday at the North Luzon Expressway.

"We believe that the NLEX would not be able to accommodate the additional volume of vehicles next week," Vergel de Dios said.

He suggested that motorists using Edsa coming from Makati and Mandaluyong make a right turn at Aurora Boulevard, Kamias Road, East Avenue, Quezon Avenue or North Avenue toward Commonwealth Avenue.

Motorists could then pass through Lagro to San Jose del Monte and Norzagaray to destinations in Bulacan or Nueva Ecija.

He added that motorists coming from Manila and the Quezon City side of A. Bonifacio Avenue could make a left at Edsa toward Monumento instead of going straight to the NLEX toll plaza.

The vehicles could then turn right at McArthur Highway from Monumento toward Bulacan and Nueva Ecija.

Vergel de Dios earlier explained said that unlike NLEX, the Southern Luzon Expressway is relatively less congested because motorists could choose from more alternate routes like Aguinaldo Highway. *Margaux Ortiz*

MARAMING SALAMAT PO,
President Gloria!

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has made huge successes in tourism, one of the pillars of her vision for a Strong Philippine Republic. The first two months of the year has seen the arrival of 384,859 tourists registering an increase of 12.8% over the figure of 2003. Last year, some 1,907,226 came in, while an even more impressive 1,932,677 made it the year before. This is the result of strong and enlightened leadership from one who can be properly considered a Woman of Wonder.

As the President turns 57 today, we would like to carry out more good and effective tourism programs under her guidance. She is truly an inspiration to all of us in the Department of Tourism and in the tourism industry.

PANGULO NG PILIPINAS
Woman of Wonder

Holiday economics

Last year, this program which adjusts observances of national and special holidays for longer weekends, generated P666 million from room bookings and other services in the countryside. The same concept will be done in 2004 to further boost domestic tourism.

WOW Summer Packages/Caravan

The DOT and the private sector particularly PHILTOA, NITAS and HSMA have forged active partnership to develop more affordable summer tour packages for Filipino tourists. This arrangement has helped brought about greater interest to travel during summer among our countrymen.

Volunteer 12 Program

In December 2003, 15,378 visitors were brought in by 17,741 registered Filipino tourism volunteers. The program generated an estimated P498M earnings to the national economy.

Intramuros: History Town Philippines

When Intramuros started the Best of the Regions program in Febuary 2003, 2.6M visitors have come to appreciate the arts and culture of the 17 regions of the country. The project has created 2,188 direct jobs and 285 indirect jobs.. Close to P520M have been generated from the Regional showcases. Sec. Pagdanganan will continue the Best of the Regions program with some enhancement on its theme and concept.

WOW Northern Philippines Hilaga

The old Paskuhan Village in the city of San Fernando, Pampanga has been renovated to become a showcase of the best in nothern Philippines. Art and cultural exhibits plus regional cuisine and music from the four regions in the North- Ilocandia, Cagayan Valley, Cordilliera and Central Luzon are the regular attractions in Hilaga.

Safe taxi System

Taxis are required to have their body numbers indicated in the side, front and back to end the problem of taxi drivers victimizing tourists. Some 413 taxicabs serving tourists have also been properly color-coded to enable proper identification.

Light and Sound Shows

The DOT has built two interesting museums, namely the Intramuros and Rizal Light and Sound Museum in Intramuros and the Victories of the Revolutions Light and Sound Museum located in Imus, Cavite. These are part of the program of developing history oriented products for Filipino and foreign tourists.

Making it better

AFTER a successful stint as Secretary of Agrarian Reform, Hon. Roberto 'Obet' Pagdanganan assumed office as the new Secretary of Tourism on February 26, vice Richard J. Gordon who resigned to run in the national elections.

The new secretary believes that as much as 2.2 million tourists can be enticed to come to the country by the end of the year through his new advocacy campaign, "**Ganda ng Pilipinas, Galing ng Pilipino" program (GP2).**

This, he said, can be done by fully harnessing the two best assets of the Philippines: its cultural, historical and religious treasures that can be found in a land rich in nature's bounty; and, its talented, creative, hardworking and friendly people.

Sec. Pagdanganan recognizes our world renowned Filipinos like Leah Salonga, Andion Fernandez and Odoniel Gonzaga who have made the country proud with their sheer talent. There are also the ordinary people who work as bellboys, waiters, tour guides and taxi drivers who, as front liners create a lasting positive impression on foreign guests.

The new DOT chief says the success of the GP2 program will hinge on the DOT's ability to entice ordinary Filipinos to become volunteers, thereby institutionalizing the "culture of tourism."

Less than two months after assuming the top DOT post, Pagdanganan has set into motion a number of programs whose impact will be far-reaching. Some of these projects are:

1. **'Biyaheng Singko Singko'** -- For P555, anyone can travel to a selected tourist spot in the country. This is a program that will make tourism accessible to ordinary Filipinos.
2. **Strong Domestic Tourism Program** -- Through partnership with the LGU's, media and the private sector, the DOT will create more interesting domestic tourism activities designed to make Filipinos better appreciate their country, history and culture.
3. **GP2 Call Center** -- The DOT will establish an active 24-hour call center to answer queries, complaints of tourists anywhere in the Philippines.
4. **Focused International Tourism Marketing** -- Increasing tourist arrivals from source markets overseas means doing focused marketing. Traditional and emerging markets will be the targets for the DOT's marketing and sales campaign. As an example, the DOT will soon open an office in Beijing to tap the highly potential Chinese market.
5. **Opening of International Airports**--Laoag International Airport, particularly, is being eyed to be the secondary hub for the Chinese market. Philippine Airlines recently has expanded its **Laoag-Manila** operation to increase flights from 2 to 4 times a week.

Mediawise Communications

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WOWPHILIPPINES

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E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph
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SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Mangulat

BASKETBALL: NBA-Jazz vs Clippers; 10:30 a.m. (r-10 p.m.); Solar Sports; Spurs vs Lakers; 8 p.m.; IBC 13—The Jazz tries to keep a stranglehold on the eighth playoff spot against the Clippers while Western heavyweights San Antonio and LA collide in the Staples Center.

MOTOR SPORTS: F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix Race Day; 4 p.m. (r); Star Sports—Shift to reverse to see all the spectacular action on the racetrack.

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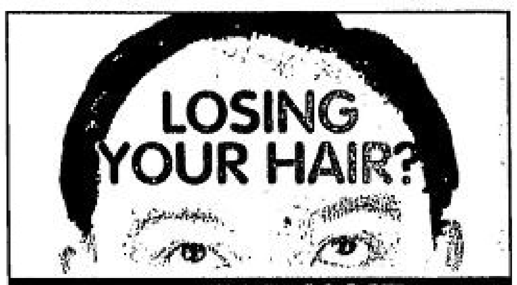

Alaska routs FedEx anew

ALASKA'S Sonny Thoss (left) drives against FedEx's Ranidel de Ocampo. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

By June Navarro

FEDEX altered its import and coach but the result against Alaska remained unchanged.

The Aces clobbered the Express, 103-88, for the second time around in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

During their initial bout, the Aces also routed the Express, 105-80, with coach Bonnie Garcia calling the shots and Alvin Jefferson reinforcing FedEx at that time.

Last night, it was coach Joe Lipa and import Mike Maddox's turn to lose.

The only difference was Alaska coach Tim Cone's reinforced belief that Lipa could steer the Express to greater heights.

"I must admit it. It's intimidating to go out there against Joe. He's a legend and successful everywhere he'd been. Give him a couple more games and he'll turn everything for FedEx," said Cone.

The Express forced the Aces to commit a conference-high 29 turnovers, nine of them courtesy of Galen Young and seven by Ali Peek.

Young scored 31 points and hauled down 15 rebounds while Peek added 21 and 14 for the Aces, who closed out their first-round campaign with a second-running 6-3 record.

The Express fell to their sixth defeat in eight games.

In the second game, Talk 'N Text came through with a 91-89 squeaker over Barangay Ginebra after Torraye Braggs fumbled with 2.7 ticks left. Braggs failed to launch a shot, allowing the Phone Pals to register their sixth win in eight games.

The Gin Kings dropped to 3-6.

ALASKA 103—Young 31, Peek 21, Cortez 15, Allado 8, Thoss 6, Duat 6, Cablay 5, Tejada 3, Wilson 2, Camaso 2.

FEDEX 88—Maddox 26, De Ocampo 12, Meneses 11, Yap 10, Ritualo 10, Ferriols 8, Billones 5, Gonzales 4, Ejercito 2, Pingris 0, Rodriguez 0, Bernardo 0, Arboleda 0.

Quarters: 24-19, 50-44, 74-62, 103-88

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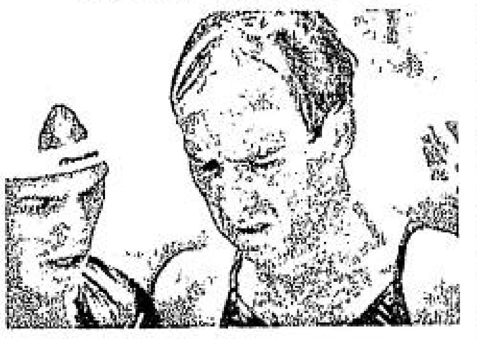
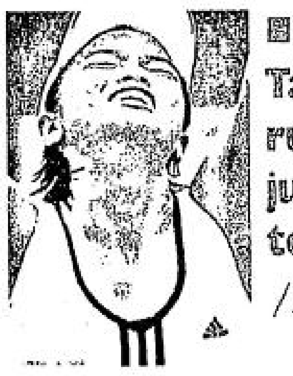


Kazakh halts Japanese /A26



Briton, Taiwanese rule juniors tennis /A26

Sorenstam stays on top /A27

UConn sets up final vs Georgia Tech /A28

Serena zaps Russian foe in final /A30

Key Apo holds off Neat Laurel /A32

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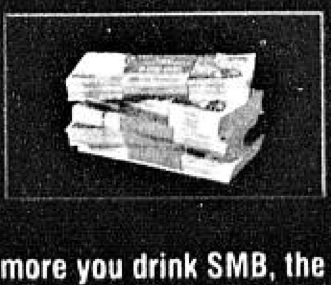
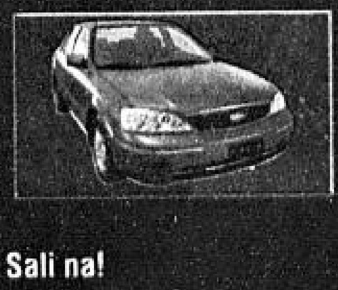


6 WINNERS OF FORD LYNX



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Tour Pilipinas team captains presented today

THE 2004 Tour Pilipinas, the second edition of the fabled summer sports spectacle's revival era, will be launched and the 12 team captains representing the 84 cyclists competing will be formally presented in elaborate rites today.

Tour Pilipinas chair Bert Lina, whose Air21 is again principally bankrolling the event slated April 12-May 2, and organizer Lito Alvarez will present the skippers to the public and media at the Air21 offices in Makati City. Lina and Alvarez will also announce the team assignments as well as sponsors of the 84 cyclists who have been divided into 12 teams of seven riders each.

Mar Mendoza, Tour executive, and former champion Paquito Rivas, the Tour's race manager and president of the Philippine National Cycling Association, will also be present, along with former repeat champion Cornelio Padilla Jr., the Tour's legal and race consultant.

Last year's champion Arnel Quirimit, who has trained his sights on a historic back-to-back crown, heads the cast of skippers who are the cream of the crop of Philippine cycling.

Besides Quirimit, the other skippers who will come along with their respective coaches are Merculio Ramos, Warren Davadilla, Ryan Tanguilig, Albert Primero, Carlo Guieb, Renato Dolosa, Victor Espiritu, Felix Celeste, Enrique Domingo, Santy Barnachea and Placido Valdez.

The roster also has former champions Davadilla (1998), Guieb (1993-94), Dolosa (1992-95) and Espiritu (1996). Bernard Llentada, the 1991 champion, is 38 and is still racing this year with Quirimit's team.

Another notable is Eusebio Quinones, who won a gold medal in mountain bike's crosscountry in the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games last December. Quinones, who has raced in 2003, is assistant skipper to Davadilla.

Today's presentation falls a week before the 600-strong Tour entourage embarks for Sorsogon, Sorsogon, the kick off point of the 17-stage, 21-day odyssey next Monday.

At least P4.7 million will be up for grabs this year, with the champion team getting P1 million and the individual classification winner bagging P200,000.

Emphasis has always been on team effort in the Tour Pilipinas because a rider would encounter difficulty hurdling the grueling stages, each of which is no less than 80 km.

ABS-CBN has become the Tour Pilipinas' broadcast partner this year and through its Studio 23, the Tour will be aired both live and on a delayed basis throughout the duration of the event.

ASIAN TRIATHLON

Kazakh halts Japanese

KAZAKHSTAN
SMART
SMART

GAAG (right) is hugged by Sapunov at the finish line. The Kazakhs finished 1-2 yesterday. Filipina Alessandra Araullo descends from her bike Saturday. ROMY HOMILLADA

By Trina Ibarle

SUBIC—Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Gaag whipped up a comeback in the 10-K run to win the men's elite open crown yesterday, snapping the Japanese stranglehold of the Speedo 2004 Asian Triathlon Championships at the Subic Bay Freeport.

Trailing Japanese Hideo Fukui and Hirokatsu Tayama in the 1.5-K swim and 40-K bike legs, Gaag took the lead toward the start of the run's final lap and finished with a 1:58:30 time in the event organized by the Triathlon Association of the Philippines and hosted by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

Compatriot Daniil Sapunov finished a minute behind Gaag with 1:58:31 for second place as Tayama ended up with 1:58:39 for third. Sapunov was rewarded the Olympic qualifying slot since Gaag has already qualified for the Athens Olympics.

On the distaff side, Japan's Akiko Sekine topped the open elite after finishing in 2:06:17 for her third Asian championship and the other Olympic slot.

The Philippines' Arland Macasieb clocked 2:14:39 and emerged as the country's top finisher in the men's elite at 14th place. Three-time national champion George Vilog and Noel Salvador ended up at 17th and 19th.

Ani Karina de Leon logged in 2:34:30 for 17th place as duathlete Anne Marisse Nagtalon and Mylene Jarina settled for 19th and 20th place in the women's elite.

Japan's Kazuma Higa toppled Kazakhstan finishers Aslan Abdrakhmonov and Roman Bauer for the male junior sprint plum, while Aoi Kuramoto and Wajima Hiromi bagged the first and second place in the female junior sprint.

Lea Langit from UST's swim team finished at 13th place in the female junior sprint, while Emmanuel Dominique Quilala settled for 17th place in the male junior event.

CHAN exults after defeating Hsu in the girls' finals. ERNIE U. SARMIENT

Briton, Taiwanese top juniors tennis

GREAT Britain's Tom Rushby and Chinese Taipei's Chan Yung Jan emerged boys' and girls' singles champions, respectively, at the close of the 15th Mitsubishi Lancer International Juniors Tennis Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The ninth-seeded Rushby capitalized on his huge forehand to conquer seventh seed Tushar Liberhan of India, 6-4, 7-6 (10-8), in one hour, 40 minutes for the boys' title.

"I just want to knock him off balance by using my forehand," said the 17-year-old Rushby, who won his second Group 1 event after the Malaysia leg two weeks ago.

"Yesterday, the heat did not matter but today, it affected my game," added Rushby, who eliminated top seed Karan Rastogi of India and fourth seed William Ward of New Zealand on his way to the final of this 25-nation event sponsored by Accel Sports and Wilson balls.

Rushby, who reached the quarterfinals last year, became the second Briton to win the title since Martin Lee in 1995. He also won a total of 150 International Tennis Federation (ITF) points.

Liberhan, 17, of Chandigarn town near New Delhi, fought gallantly but his effort fell short to the more aggressive Briton.

"He's (Rushby) a good player, he has a good baseline game," said Liberhan after losing his first-ever final match in a Group 1 event.

"I tried my best but my opponent played better. I'm just happy to reach the final," said Liberhan, India's No. 2 junior player, who won the singles and doubles titles in a Group 2 tournament in New Delhi two months ago.

The world juniors No. 7 Chan captured the girls crown after posting a 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 victory over second seed compatriot Hsu Weh-Hsin.

In the boys' doubles final, Lachlan Ferguson and Joel Kerley of Australia defeated Antal Van Der Duim and Coen Van Kuelen of the Netherlands, 7-5, 5-7, 2-2 (ret.).

Celebrity players form Strong Republic squad

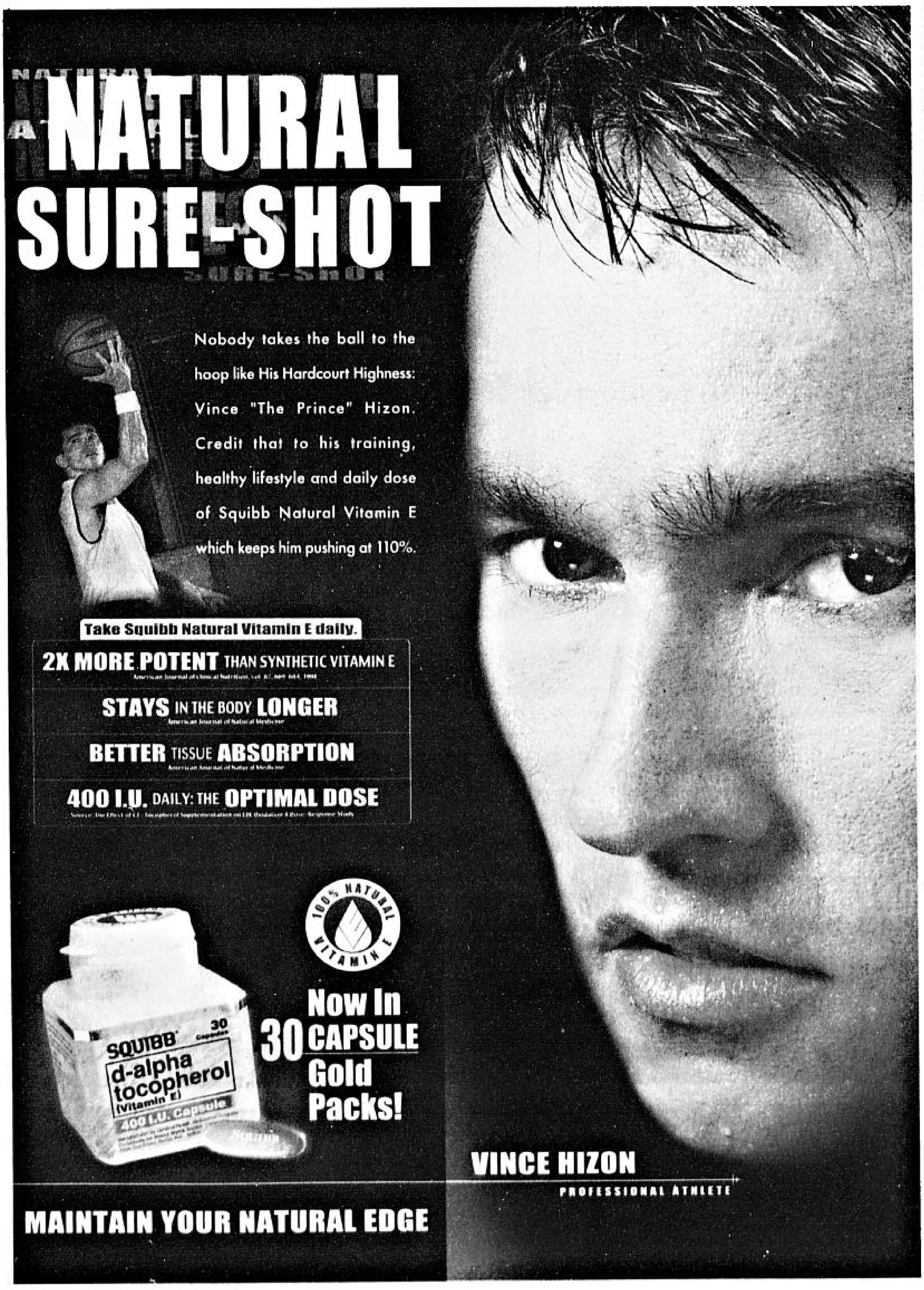
CELEBRITIES have formed the "Strong Republic Basketball Team" in support of the grassroots sports-related programs of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Calling themselves "Mga Kaibigan ni Pangulong Gloria," the star-studded team include Cesar Montano, Ian Veneracion, Monsour del Rosario, Dencio Padilla and Onyok Velasco.

"We volunteered for this basketball team because we believe in the President's mission to save the youth from illegal drugs and other vices through sports," said coach Arturo Valenzona.

The team, which also includes NCAA and UAAP players, will hold exhibition games with local folks in different municipalities and barangays in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Valenzona said the players are inspired by the "Programang Palaro ng Pangulo" which was launched last year to involve young people in sports activities.



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Sorenstam scrambles, stays on top

LOS ANGELES—Defending champion Annika Sorenstam scrambled to stay in front, shooting a 2-under 70 on Saturday in the second round of the Office Depot Championship.

Sorenstam, who also won the event in 2001 and finished a stroke behind winner Se Ri Pak in 2002, is two shots in front of Meg Mallon and Rosie Jones.

Sorenstam was at 4-under 138 in the 54-hole tournament.

Mallon had a 71, and Jones shot her second straight 70 at El Caballero Country Club, with the course again not yielding many low scores.

Sorenstam has been difficult to catch when she takes a lead into the final round, winning 33 of the 52 times she previously was in front beginning the last 18 holes.

If she wins, it would be her 50th career LPGA Tour victory, and also mark the seventh time she's gone wire-to-wire to win.

Mi-Hyun Kim, beaten by Sorenstam in a playoff for the title three years ago at Wilshire Country Club, was in contention again with a 71 that left her five shots off the lead.

Five shots back

Filipina Jennifer Rosales was also five shots adrift following a 70.

Pak, who finished in a three-way tie for second last year, had a second-round 70 and was at 144.

Sorenstam's shots on the 17th seem to reflect her up-and-down round: a poor shot here, a scrambling shot there and then a fine shot within a foot of the hole.

She pulled her drive into trees on the left, had to hit her second shot from a cramped stance up against a tree, and still was able to punch the ball 150 yards and curve it up the fairway.

Still 102 yards out, the Swedish star hit a wedge shot that landed several feet below the pin, bounced once just beyond the cup, and the backspin brought the ball backward where it rimmed the hole and stopped a foot away.

Sorenstam grinned, shook her head and made a swirling motion with her hand, mimicking the way the ball went spinning around the rim.

Tap-in birdie

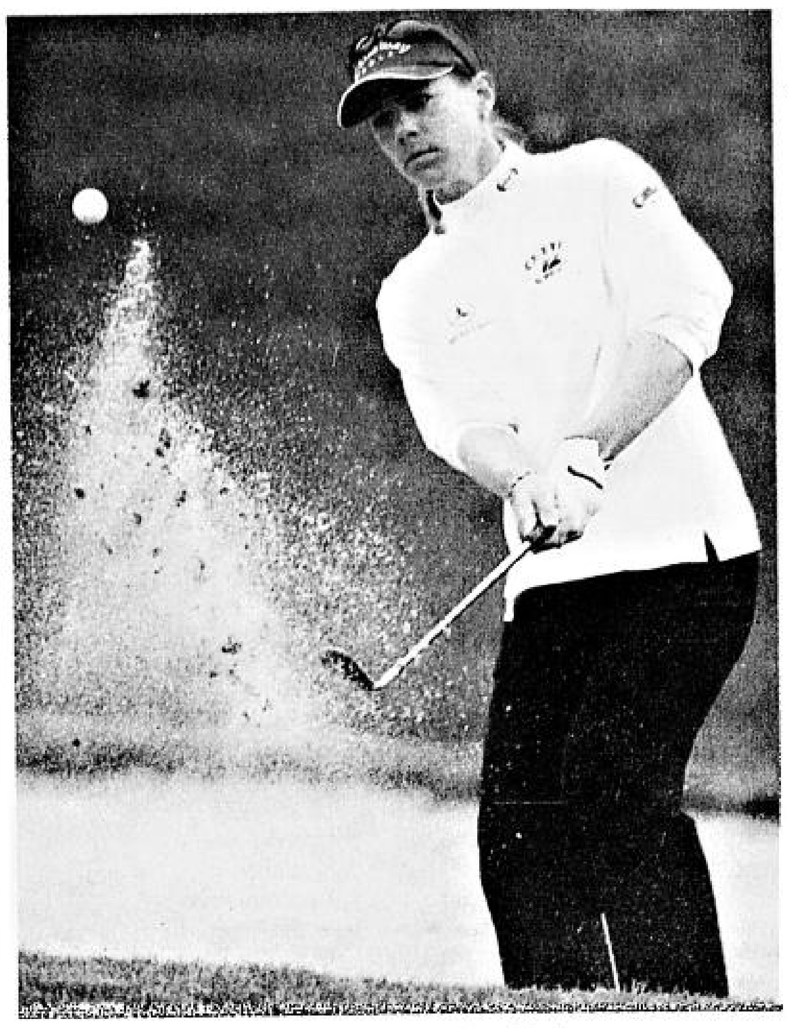
She went on to tap in for a birdie on the par-5, 463-yard hole to reach 7 under.

Sorenstam played No. 18 in similar fashion but without the good recovery and ended up with a bogey. Her drive strayed to the right, she had to punch out into the fairway again, hit her approach to within 15 feet of the hole and two-putted to finish the 400-yard par 4.

Jones also had a roller-coaster round, taking a double bogey on the par-4, 383-yard third hole. She drove into the rough, hit her approach shot into a bunker, left her next shot short, pitched then two-putted.

She had a two-shot swing go her way on No. 15, when her 9-iron shot from 126 yards out bounced into the hole for an eagle.

Karrie Webb couldn't overcome an opening 81 and failed to make the cut despite her second-round 72. Laura Diaz shot a 71, but also missed the cut because she had an 82 the first day. *AP*



SORENSTAM hits a bunker shot on the fourth hole. AFP

Johnson ahead by 3 in BellSouth meet

DULUTH, Georgia—Zach Johnson shot a 4-under 68 to take a three-stroke lead over Padraig Harrington and Scott Hend after the third round of the BellSouth Classic.

"I really didn't get nervous," Johnson said Saturday. "It doesn't feel that different. It's just golf."

Harrington shot a 67, rallying after a triple bogey by making six birdies on his last 10 holes in the last event before the Masters. Coming off a second-place finish in The Players Championship last week—his second straight runner-up finish in that tournament—the Irish star is looking for his first victory on the PGA Tour.

"It would be important to win on the US tour," Harrington said. "I'm not putting pressure on myself to do it (here) or anything like that. We'll wait and see how it goes."

After leading the developmental Nationwide Tour in earnings in 2003, Johnson is off to a solid start this season. He has made four of six cuts and $335,031—good for 58th on the money list—and he's coming off a tie for sixth at Bay Hill in his previous start.

So far, life on the PGA Tour hasn't fazed him.

"The crowds can probably get to you a little bit, with their chanting and whatnot," Johnson said. "But I kind of enjoy that."

He got a bit off track in the middle of the third round. On the par-5 10th, Johnson pulled his drive into the rough, and he put his next shot through the fairway into a bunker.

An indifferent pitch left him in a green-side bunker, but he splashed out close to the hole and made his par putt. *AP*

Asian fencing meet slated April 16-29

BUSAN Asian Games gold medalist Sergey Shabalin of Kazakhstan and Vietnam SEA Games gold winners Nontapat Panchan and Siriroj Rathraprasert will be among the favorites in the Sharp Asian fencing championships and the Asia-Oceania Olympic qualifying competitions on April 19-26 at the Philsports Arena.

Shabalin and Siriroj both triumphed in epee while Nontapat was SEAG's foil champion.

Twenty countries, including host Philippines, have so far confirmed their participation in the event organized by the Philippine Amateur Fencing Association (Pafa) and International Management group (IMG) and sponsored by Sharp Phils.

These are Brunei, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

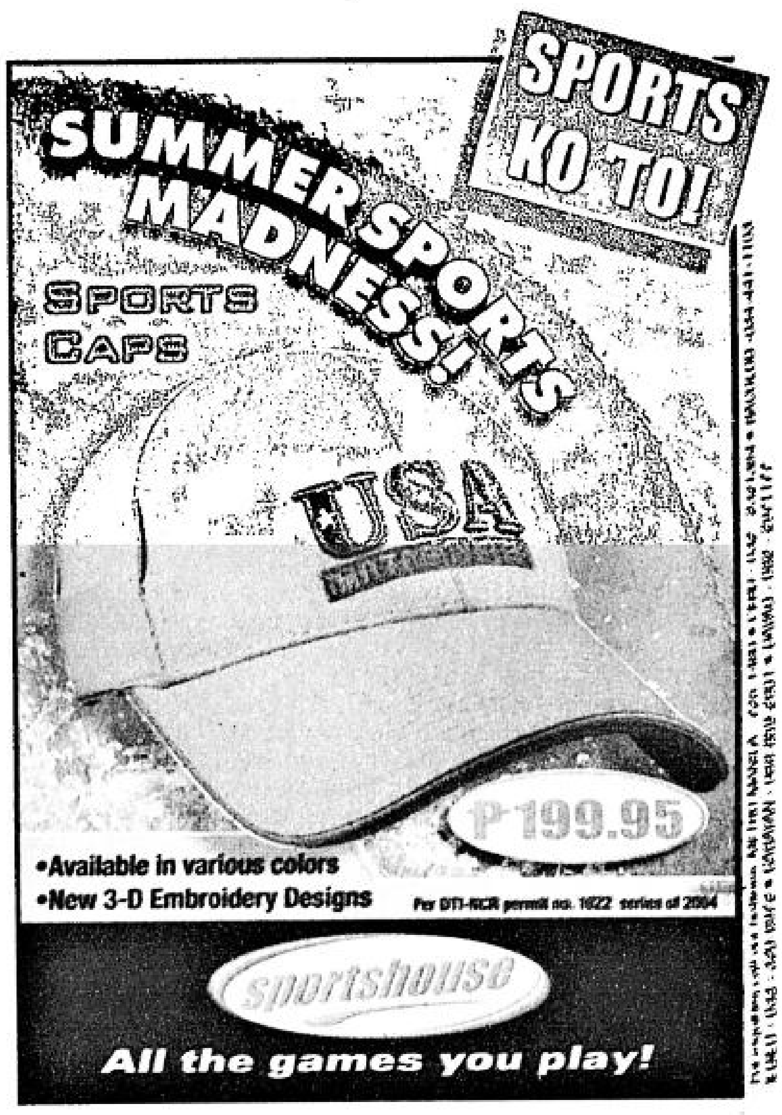
Sharp executives Roberto Littaua and Ernesto F. Rendon have expressed full support to the event.

Despite the tough field, POC and Pafa president Celso L. Dayrit is optimistic of the Filipino fencers' chances to make it to the Athens Olympics on Aug. 13-29.

At stake are two berths each in women's foil and sabre and one each in women's and men's epee, men's foil and men's sabre.

The Philippines emerged overall champion in the fencing event of the Vietnam SEA Games late last year.

Among the top RP entries in the Sharp Asian tourney are Walbert Mendoza, Veena Tessa Nuestro, Joanna Franquelli, Emerson Segui, Rolando Canlas, Wilfredo Vizcayno, Avelino Victorino and Edmon Velez.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Does FPJ know his (RP) basketball?

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

COULD FPJ, who plays point guard, succeed in unifying our fragmented people and make the Philippines, like a basketball team, winner and champ again?

Maybe yes. Maybe no.

What's clear, as repeatedly explained in Mr. Poe's political ads, is that his main goal is a united, progressive Philippines.

He wants the *bayan* to be *bida*.

That claim is not exactly hollow.

But, of course, you know that this is easier said than done.

In asking for your vote, FPJ also wants to make it clear that it would take a non-politician, with a heart like his, to make the magic work.

***

The key? Unity, of course.

Teamwork, to be more exact.

You've seen that ad, FPJ handsome in a light brown jacket, preaching to young members of a basketball squad the gospel and the magic of teamwork.

Not everybody can be a shooter. Not everybody can be captain ball.

There should be strict role designation.

Just like in the movies, not everybody can be a director, not everybody can be a leading man.

Of course, if FPJ bags the presidency, he would be both director and leading man.

He would be both coach and star player.

***

But given the big role, would FPJ be both powerful and magnificent enough to subdue the galloping political monsters that are bound to claw blindly and breathe hard on his neck?

He could tell the grizzled politicians in his team to play their assigned roles?

Maybe FPJ could try.

But, new as he is in the political ballgame, FPJ need not be told, again, that putting these politicians in their proper places is next to impossible.

It's very charming how FPJ has also made it appear problems could be readily remedied using the basketball solution.

***

Suddenly, everything seems very simple in that TV ad.

In a charming, well-crafted sequence, there's a youngish, fresh-looking FPJ gallantly trumpeting teamwork as the key to success and progress.

Will things be really that simple?

Actually, before everybody gets carried away, voters should also start asking if FPJ is aware of the real score in the local basketball scene.

Why? Because if his handlers had bothered to assess Da King on the ugly state of affairs in Philippine basketball, he would have turned to another vehicle to send his unity message across.

Not only is the Basketball Association of the Philippines being run by Graham Lim, a Chinese with a pending court case who also has been found to have falsified his citizenship papers.

Without going to personalities, the dirty divisiveness in the local basketball scene could've made FPJ cringe.

As former Philippine Olympic Committee president Julian Malonso has predicted, RP again stands to be suspended by the International Olympic Committee due to the prevailing basketball mess hereabouts.

Said Malonso, a reserve colonel (Philippine Army): "I wonder why POC president Celso Dayrit has had to consult the IOC on whether or not to recognize the Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP). Dayrit obviously is not aware that the IOC prohibits government intervention in sports. The decision of the Court requiring National Sports Associations to register with the Security and Exchange Commission (Lina rider) is, I believe, pure and simple government intervention. Dayrit has bypassed the local IOC representative. Besides, IOC might think we are ignorant of the international rules...In case of conflict, the IOC prevails over the POC rule."

As things stand, basketball here is a damned, losing vehicle to project the dreamed-of unity among our fragmented people.

Yes, Philippine basketball today represents divisiveness and disunity.

But, after everything has been said and done, it's too late now to change that cute FPJ campaign script.

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NCAA SHOWDOWN

UConn trips Duke, sets up final vs Georgia Tech

SAN ANTONIO—With a stunning end to a game that looked lost, Connecticut proved it can win the close ones, too.

Led by All-American Emeka Okafor, UConn scored 12 straight points down the stretch Saturday night to rally for a 79-78 victory over Duke and move one game away from the national title.

Okafor, who spent almost all of the first half on the bench in foul trouble, scored five points, grabbed three rebounds and shut down Duke's offense over the last four minutes, after Duke had taken a 75-67 lead.

The 6-foot-10 center, who can do a little of everything, finished with 18 points and seven rebounds.

In Monday night's final, the Huskies will play Georgia Tech, a 67-65 winner over Oklahoma State earlier Saturday. UConn will go for its second championship since 1999 when it beat Duke.

Duke, which led almost the entire game, walked away a loser in its first Final Four appearance since 2001, when the Blue Devils won it all.

Connecticut hadn't been challenged in the tournament at all, winning its four games by an average of about 17 points. The Blue Devils changed that.

Saddled with two fouls in the first four minutes that sent UConn coach Jim Calhoun into a tizzy against the refs, Okafor sat on the bench and didn't score a point before halftime.

Duke took advantage, ran the ball and pushed its lead to double figures.

In the end, though, it was the Blue Devils' foul trouble that did them in. All three of their centers —Shelden Williams, Shavlik Randolph and Nick Horvath —fouled out, and by the end, there was nobody to contain Okafor.

He gave UConn a 76-75 lead with 26 seconds left on a typically relentless sequence, missing a shot that bounced around the rim for a couple seconds, but grabbing the rebound for an easy stick back.

Duke came down and guard J.J. Redick drove the lane, but guess who was there? Okafor, and he stuck a hand in to break up that scoring chance.

UConn's Rashad Anderson hit two freethrows to push the lead to three, and after Redick barely grazed the rim with a 3-point attempt that would have tied it, Okafor got the rebound and made a freethrow to ice the game.

Chris Duhon banked in a 3-pointer at the buzzer to cut the final margin to one. *AP*

AP **OKAFOR: Can do a little of everything**

SPORTSWATCH

Del Rosarios rule dancesport meet

DANCE athletes Jojie and Jonah del Rosario emerged the biggest winners in the recently held 2004 DSCP (Dance Sport Council of the Philippines) First Quarter Ranking and Competitions at the Philsports Arena. DSCP president Becky Garcia said the Del Rosario couple won three events, namely Standard D, Standard E and Standard Special Event 1 in the well-attended dancefest sponsored by Petron Corp., Alaxan FR, Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Olympic Committee, PCSO, Manila Times, RPN 9, Joey 92.3, Rhythm NBC, Water Zone and Savannah Moon. Sharing the spotlight with two gold medals each were PSA awardees Reynato Rener Mercado and Judith Anne Melencio (Latin Youth and Standard Youth), Jerswin and Anne Melencio (Ten Dance and Standard A) and the Oliver Ian Gutierrez-Luningning Kucharrysky tandem (Latin B and Latin C categories). The other winners were Michael Mendoza-Francesca Mazzacurati, Menachem de Asis and Maureen Mhay Cobilla, Joel and Anabelle Madera, Efren Ibo and Devine Dimaano, Jose Nacario-Catherine Pescante, William Dave Bernardino-Cynthia Tajon, James Paul Talusan-Garica Mae Melencio, Jan Rodis-Emily Rodriguez, Jefferson Pimentel-Marjorie Cabuenas, Jose Linga-Michoyo Sakuma, Juanito Mahinay-Marilyn Oliva, Walter Gabato-Cherry Fernandez, Lowell Tan-Margarita de la Rama, and the pair of Rodel Espinosa and Ma. Nenita de los Reyes.

Carlos keys Real Madrid victory

MADRID, Spain—Roberto Carlos scored twice from deflections off free kicks Saturday as Real Madrid beat Albacete, 2-1, and reinforced its leadership of the Spanish league. The Brazil defender's goals came on his 397th appearance for Madrid, breaking legendary Argentine forward Alfredo Di Stefano's record for non-Spanish players. Madrid's victory added pressure on Valencia, which needs to beat last-place Murcia on Sunday to stay within reach of the top spot. "It was a difficult match for both teams," Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz said. "When they had the ball we closed them down well and vice versa. Later Saturday, FC Barcelona drew 0-0 with Villarreal, failing to stretch its winning streak in the league to 10 matches. Earlier, Sevilla beat Espanyol, 1-0, and boosted its hopes of playing in next season's UEFA Cup. Madrid has 67 points from 31 games, four points more than Valencia, which has played 30. Deportivo de La Coruna is third with 56 points from 30 games, followed by Barcelona, which is also on 56 from 30. *AP*

Bonds urine sample could be retested

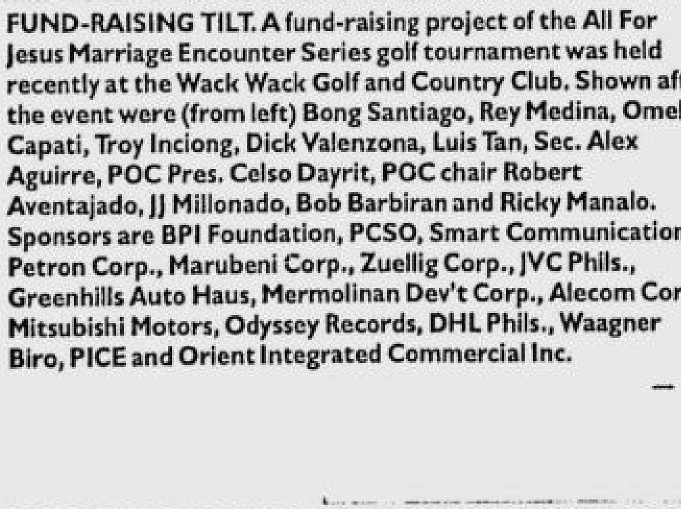
SAN FRANCISCO, California—Urine samples submitted by Barry Bonds and six other professional baseball players were not destroyed and could be retested to see if they contain a designer steroid, the San Francisco Chronicle reported on Saturday. The seven players are among dozens of athletes who testified last year in front of a grand jury probing a California-based nutritional supplements lab, Balco. The lab is believed to be the source of the designer steroid THG. Federal government investigators had asked that the results of testing conducted by Major League Baseball be revealed last year. It was thought only hard copy files remained until the newspaper reported the samples exist. The news is significant because one substance reportedly given to American athletes by Balco is THG. The designer steroid was unknown at the time the initial MLB testing was done, but now it has been banned and new testing procedures are able to detect it. *AFP*

Summer tennis camp at Valle Verde

VARSITY coaches Roland Kraut (La Salle), Karl Santamaria (UST), Dennis Sta. Cruz and Randy de Guzman will conduct tennis clinics in the third Prince Varsity Volley Summer Tennis Camp slated April 12 to May 7 at the Valle Verde Country Club in Pasig City. Sponsored by Accel and Nassau, the camp offers lessons for beginners, intermediate and advanced lessons for beginners, intermediate and advanced every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 8-10 a.m. and 6:30-8 p.m. For inquiries, contact Mercy or Karl at 700-1393, 722-6758 and 09207452180.

St. Theresa's golfest unfolds April 16

THE ST. THERESA'S Alumnae Association Quezon City will hold its 1st Fun Golf Tournament at the Philippine Navy Golf Club on April 16. The tournament is one of the fund-raising activities of the Silver Jubilarian Batch 1980 which will culminate on Homecoming Day in January 2005. Winners in the men's and ladies' Division will receive trophies while attractive major and minor raffle prizes await lucky participants. The event is sponsored by Microsoft, Globe Telecoms, Coca-Cola, and San Miguel Corp. Proceeds will help fund the various projects of the Alumnae Association as well as the school's scholarship program. For ticket sales and inquiries, call the STAAQC office at 740-0115 or e-mail staaqc@hotmail.com. Tee-off time is 7 a.m. and awarding ceremonies will be at 5 p.m. at the PNGC Clubhouse.


FUND-RAISING TILT. A fund-raising project of the All For Jesus Marriage Encounter Series golf tournament was held recently at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club. Shown after the event were (from left) Bong Santiago, Rey Medina, Omel Capati, Troy Inciong, Dick Valenzona, Luis Tan, Sec. Alex Aguirre, POC Pres. Celso Dayrit, POC chair Robert Aventajado, JJ Millonado, Bob Barbiran and Ricky Manalo. Sponsors are BPI Foundation, PCSO, Smart Communications, Petron Corp., Marubeni Corp., Zuellig Corp., JVC Phils., Greenhills Auto Haus, Mermolinan Dev't Corp., Alecom Corp., Mitsubishi Motors, Odyssey Records, DHL Phils., Waagner Biro, PICE and Orient Integrated Commercial Inc.

Cavaliers' NBA playoff hopes

Butler keeps sizzling Heat streak going

CHICAGO—Caron Butler is impressing people with his recent play.

Butler had 19 points and 14 rebounds and Eddie Jones scored 21 points in the Heat's 97-83 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Saturday night.

"Caron has been playing great. He's just found his way, found his role and I love the way he's been playing," Miami coach Stan Van Gundy said. "He is actually, in my opinion over the last 10 or 12 games, playing better basketball than he did last year because he is doing it at both ends of the floor."

Miami, a half-game behind Milwaukee for fourth place in the Eastern Conference, lost rookie guard Dwyane Wade to a ribcage injury late in the second quarter, but Wade doesn't expect to miss any games.

Miami, which has won 10 of 12 games, took a 41-31 at the half on Butler's 3-pointer at the buzzer.

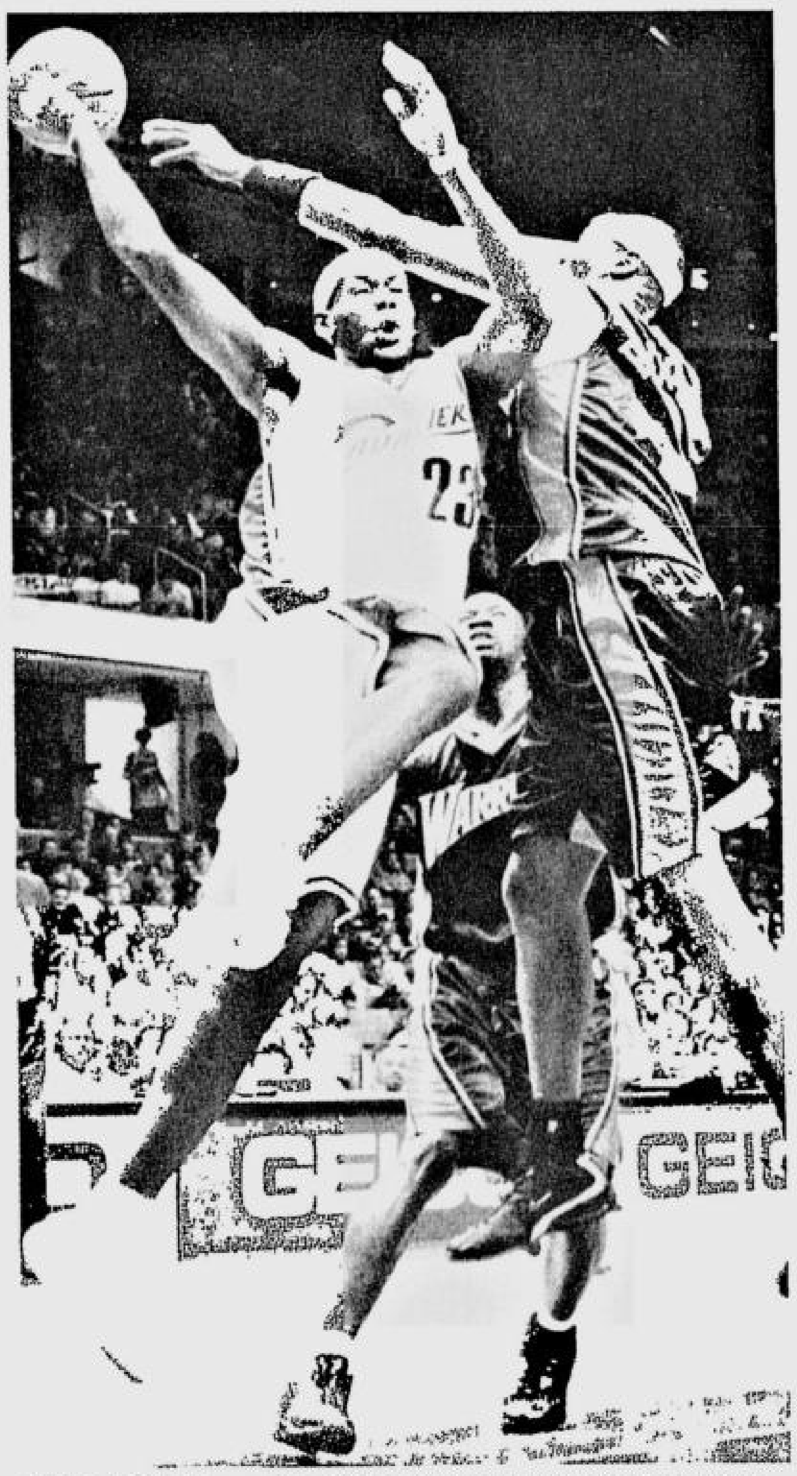
The Heat pulled away with a 14-2 run in the third quarter. Butler scored six points during the spree, and Jones hit a jumper with 4:20 left in the quarter to give Miami a 62-39 lead.

"Tonight we didn't play as well offensively as we wanted to, but defensively we did a great job. Our defense really caused them to struggle," Jones said.

Lamar Odom added 11 points and 13 rebounds for Miami, and Rasual Butler added 12 points.

The Bulls shot just 34.5 percent and failed to win their third straight game—they haven't won three in a row since December of 2002.

Eddy Curry had 20 points for the Bulls, and Jannero Pargo scored 17 points. Jamal Crawford was just 1-for-10 from the field for Chicago, scoring four points in 19 minutes. *AP*



CLIFFORD Robinson of the Golden State Warriors blocks a shot by James. The Warriors prevailed, 103-100. REUTERS

Warriors

CLEVELAND—Jason Rich
sure LeBron James didn't
last-minute heroics.

Richardson scored Gold
nal 10 points and the Warr
Cleveland, 103-100, Satu
what Cavaliers coach Paul
must-win game to stay in
tention.

"Oh yeah, I want the
hands," Richardson said. "I
ing, saying it for the long
and tonight proved that. I
go-to guy in the fourth q
make plays."

Richardson scored a se
points, topping James' 34.

A week after James sc
desperate comeback win,
get an open look with t
out.

The loss dropped Clev
games behind idle Boston
playoff spot in the Eastern
The Cavaliers have six gam

"If we run the table we'
Carlos Boozer said. "We
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The Cavaliers, who ha
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played the entire game, bu
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Down 97-92 with 1:45 l
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Richardson responded wit
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Ira Newble's three-point
99-98 with 47 seconds lef
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James' drive with anot
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With 16 seconds left, K
inbounded to James, who
for a quick two-pointer. Bu
porarily lost possession of
was double-teamed. He p
drunas Ilgauskas, who

Win over 76ers bolsters NY Knic

PHILADELPHIA—A quick turnaround is just what the New York Knicks needed to put a disappointing loss behind them.

Stephon Marbury had 20 points and 12 assists to lift the New York Knicks to an 86-75 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Saturday night.

The win, which helped solidify the Knicks' playoff positioning, was a huge lift after a 25-point loss to the New Jersey Nets on Friday.

"We were embarrassed (Friday)," Knicks coach Lenny Wilkens said. "And the way you get it back is to come out the next night and show everyone we can play the defense we talk about."

Kurt Thomas scored 15 points on 7-for-9 shooting and had 14 rebounds for New York, which moved a half-game ahead of idle Boston for seventh place in the Eastern Conference. Former Sixer Nazr Mohammed added 16 points.

"We're making a push," Marbury said. "From where we were (10th in the conference on Jan. 5) to where we are now, we've made big strides. Our mind-set and our disposition as a unit is togetherness."

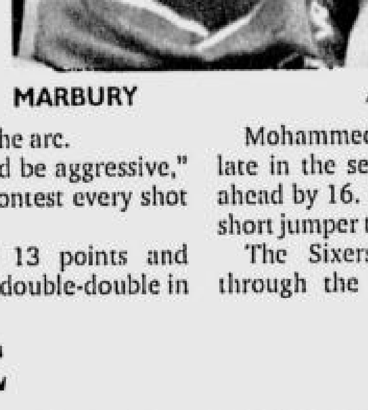
The Knicks made five of 10 3-pointers to bounce back from the previous night's 2-for-13 effort. They also registered 25 assists on their 31 field goals. Marbury had nine assists in the first half after recording none in the first two quarters against the Nets.

But, as Wilkens noted, the biggest turnaround was on defense.

New York had allowed four of its last five opponents to score over 100 points. On Saturday, the Knicks held the Sixers to 37.5-percent shooting and just 1-for-10 from beyond the arc.

"We wanted to come out and be aggressive," Thomas said. "We wanted to contest every shot and just rebound the ball."

Samuel Dalembert scored 13 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, his fifth double-double in


MARBURY AP

his last six games, for the
ers, who have lost
straight. Dalembert also s
career high with nine bloc
shots.

Dalembert fell one bl
short of the Sixers' franc
record and his first ca
triple-double.

"(Dalembert) has gotte
lot better during this seaso
Sixers guard Eric Snow s
"He has a lot of room to
prove, but he's going to
someone to reckon with n
year and in the years
come."

Mohammed had six points during a 13-4
late in the second quarter that put the Kn
ahead by 16. Mohammed closed the half wi
short jumper to make it 52-38.

The Sixers pulled within seven mid
through the fourth quarter, but Mohamn

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SCHENSCHER: Dominating figure AP

'Big Bird' gets last laugh, lifts Yellow Jackets to 1st title stint

SAN ANTONIO—Go ahead and call him "Big Bird." Luke Schenscher is definitely getting the last laugh at the Final Four.

He scores. He rebounds. He passes. He sets picks. He blocks shots. And at the end, he just got in the way.

Symbolically and literally, the 2.16-m (7-foot-1-inch) Schenscher was a dominating figure in Georgia Tech's 67-65 victory over Oklahoma State in the national semifinals Saturday.

For the first time in school history, the Yellow Jackets will play for a national championship Monday night against Connecticut.

For that, they can thank the Big Aussie, whose curly, redheaded mess of a hairdo has prompted opposing fans to taunt him with comparisons to the "Sesame Street" character.

"It just spurs me on more," Schenscher said.

Sure, Will Bynum scored the winning basket on a scintillating drive with 1.5 seconds remaining.

But Schenscher was right in the middle of things—clogging up the lane, nudging Ivan McFarlin with a shoulder and clearing a path for Bynum to drop in the shot that sent the Yellow Jackets to the title game.

Schenscher was all over the stat sheet, leading Georgia Tech with both 19 points and 12 rebounds. He also had an assist and a block, but that told only part of the story.

He was constantly setting picks that created space. He drew a bunch of double-teams, which freed up teammates. He kept putting Oklahoma State one-and-out when the Cowboys missed a shot.

"Luke helped me a lot," Bynum said. "He's been big for us all year."

Back in his native Australia, it was party time. Family and friends began gathering about 6 a.m. at the Schenscher home in Hope Forest, a small farming community in southern Australia.

They threw some eggs and bacon on the barbie and gathered around the TV to watch the game. There were some harrowing moments—such as the satellite going out as the clock wound down. But the picture came back on for the final minute of the game.

"Even though we're a world away," Barbara Schenscher said by telephone, barely able to contain her emotions, "we're still a part of this."

After Oklahoma State's desperation heave fell far short at the buzzer, Schenscher carried his teammates one final time.

Or at least one. Senior guard Marvin Lewis, who got the Yellow Jackets going with five 3-pointers in the first half, leaped into Schenscher's arms.

Yep, this was a g'day for the Yellow Jackets.

Heading off the court, Schenscher paused to slap hands with Georgia Tech's fans—some of them wearing T-shirts bearing the message: "Luke has a posse."

"I'm so good looking," Schenscher said, explaining his newfound fans. "To tell you the truth, I don't know why they would want to put my ugly face on a T-shirt."

Schenscher has become something of a cult hero during Georgia Tech's run to the championship game. He arrived in Atlanta as a gangly, unknown player from Down Under. In fact, he wouldn't have even gotten a scholarship if not for another player getting kicked off the team for a run-in with the law.

Schenscher was headed to Drexel, but the coaching staff there was fired. After a few phone calls, the Yellow Jackets had a new center.

"He had so much potential," Lewis said. "He struggled the first two years, but all the hard work really paid off."

Schenscher bulked up 35 lb (16 kg)—he now weighs 250 lb (113 kg)—and worked hard to develop his game. He worked on his low-post moves. He got stronger. He improved his footwork. *AP*

GEORGIA Tech's Lewis (right) celebrates in the arms of Schenscher. AP

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e ball, then
ssed to Zy-
ussed a 3-pointer from the top of the arc to end it.

"We have won so many games in practice by me kicking it over to 'Z.' I knew he was wide open," James said.

James took over against New Jersey last Saturday and won in the final seconds to keep Cleveland's playoff hopes alive. He couldn't duplicate the effort against Golden State.

"Sometimes he takes a little too much on his shoulders, but it is a learning experience," Silas said. "He has to understand that nobody can do it by themselves."

Mike Dunleavy scored 23 points and Troy Murphy added 18 for the Warriors, who have won nine of 11.

The Warriors were without center Erick Dampier and point guards Nick Van Exel, Speedy Claxton and Avery Johnson, who had a strained hamstring Friday.

"It's incredible, it really is," Warriors coach Eric Musselman said. "It's been a difficult season with injuries, but I can't say enough about the character of the team."

Meanwhile, the Cavaliers have nearly fallen out of the playoff hunt without point guard Jeff McInnis. He will return from the injured list Tuesday and start against Toronto.

Boozer scored 26 points and 13 rebounds. Ilgauskas added 17 despite getting into foul trouble.

James tied it twice with back-to-back jumpers in the third quarter, but the Cavaliers could not claim the lead. James had 10 assists and eight rebounds.

The Cavaliers' last lead was 20-19 late in the first quarter. Golden State went on an 11-2 run behind five points from Murphy to end the first period with a 29-22 lead. *AP*

Complete results: New York 86, Philadelphia 75; Golden State 103, Cleveland 100; Dallas 124, Phoenix 103; Miami 97, Chicago 83; New Orleans 94, Portland 81.

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made a layup and Marbury nailed a 3 to extend the lead to 12.

Philadelphia cut the lead to eight with 2:28 remaining, but Tim Thomas sank two freethrows and Marbury made a 3 to seal the victory.

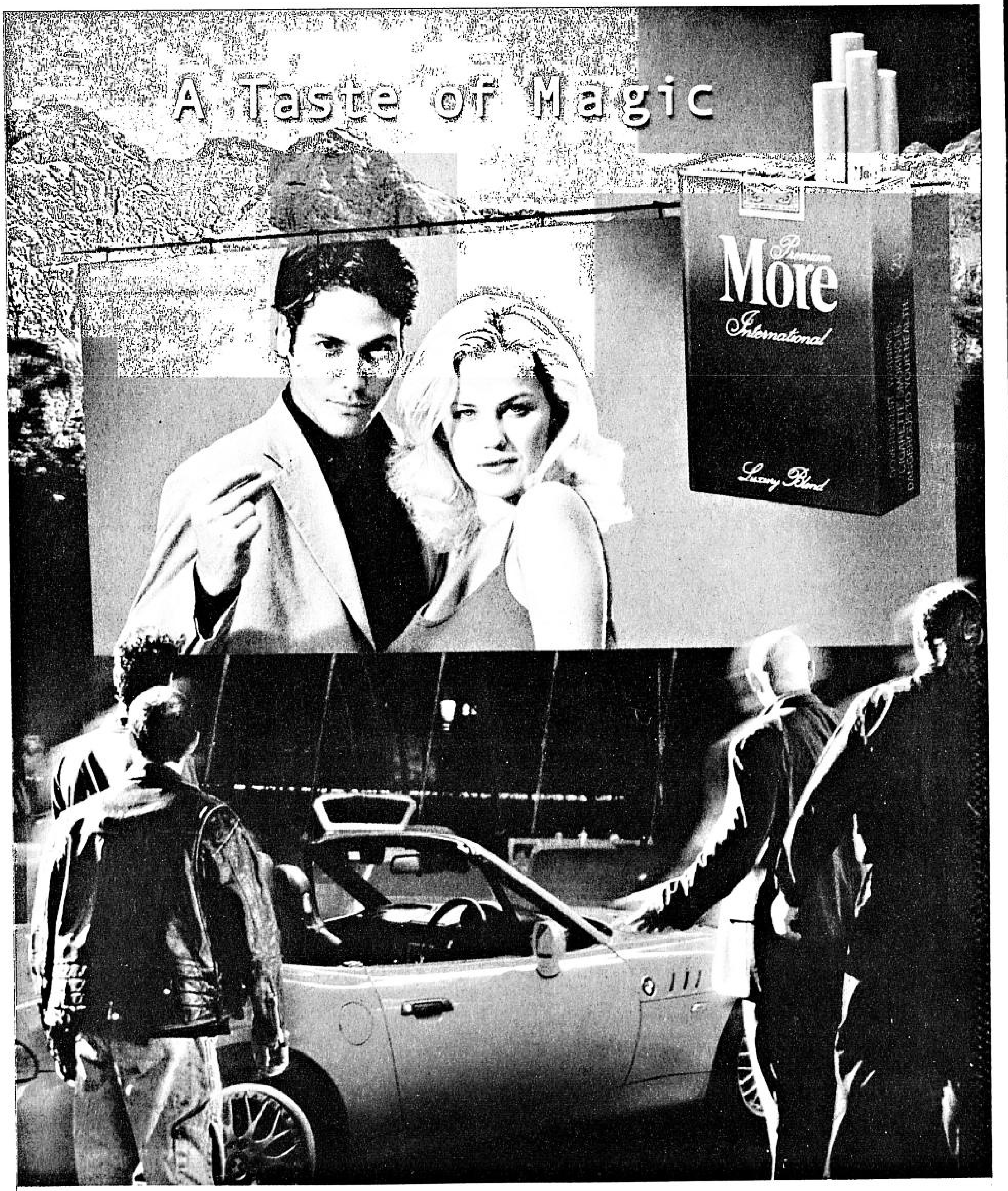
"I think (bouncing back from the loss to the Nets) shows character. We were all talking about it," Wilkens said. "How were we going to come out tonight? If we've got any character, then we'd come out and try to redeem ourselves and play better."

Tim Thomas went 9-for-10 from the line for 15 points.

Rookie Willie Green had a team-high 14 points for Philadelphia. Snow and Kenny Thomas each scored 13.

Philadelphia led 4-2 before handing over the lead for good. They shot just 35 percent in the first half and now trail Boston by 3 1/2 games with five games remaining.

"That was a crucial game," Dalembert said. "We had it and we let it slip back. We have to think forward now." *AP*



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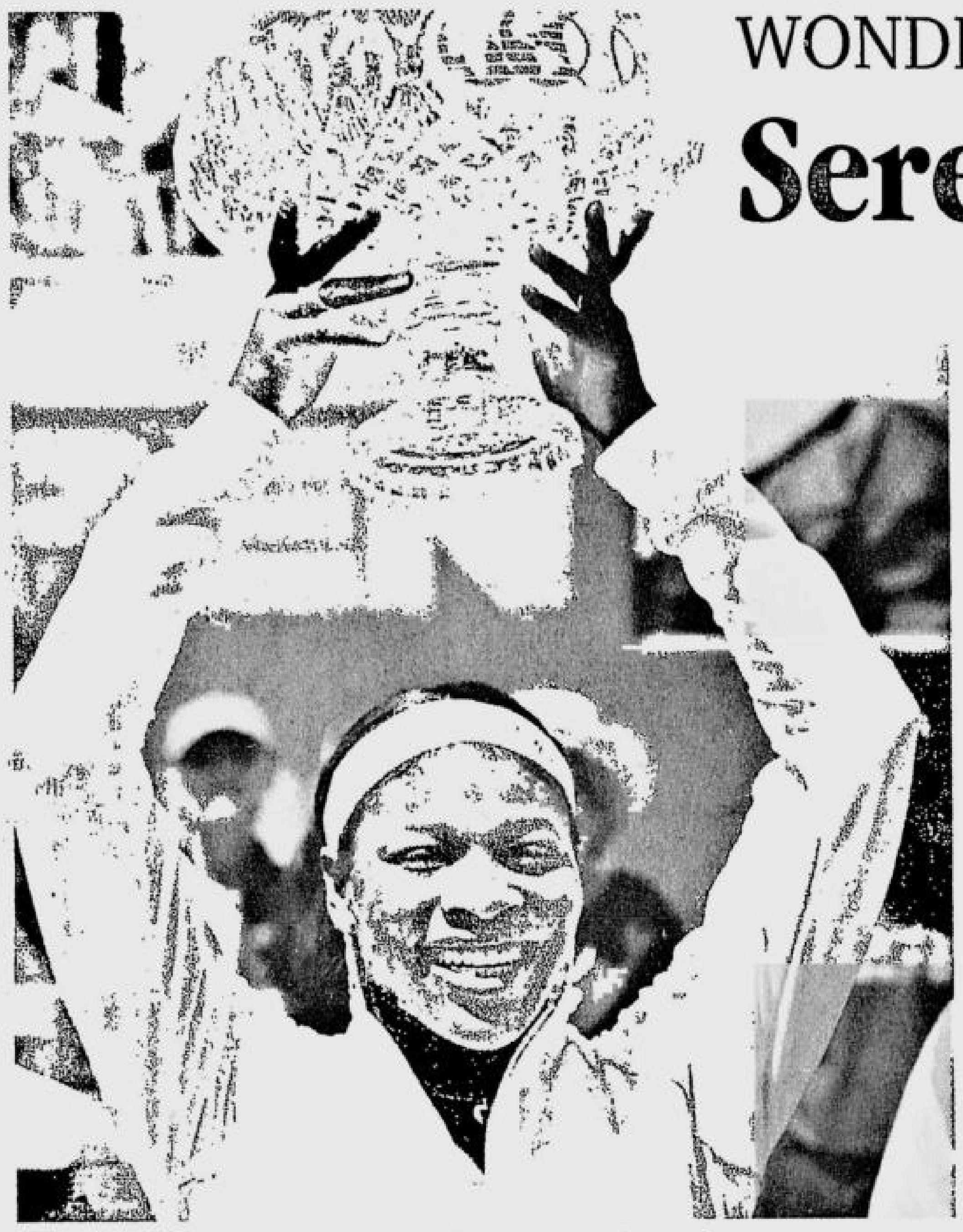
WONDER WOMAN FEAT

Serena zaps Russian foe



WILLIAMS holds the winner's trophy after her victory over Dementieva. REUTERS

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida—Serena Williams skipped and grinned and blew kisses, a little surprised to be a champion so soon after an eight-month layoff following her Wimbledon title.

The boldest, brashest player in women's tennis exceeded even her own expectations at the Nasdaq-100 Open. Williams culminated her Key Biscayne comeback Saturday with a performance worthy of her Wonder Woman outfit, routing Elena Dementieva of Russia, 6-1, 6-1.

The 50-minute women's final was the most one-sided in the 20-year history of the tournament.

"I think the rust has definitely worn off," Williams said. "Honestly, I didn't expect to win my first tournament back."

The top-seeded Williams, returning from knee surgery Aug. 1, lost just one set en route to her third consecutive Key Biscayne title. And she was at her most overwhelming against Dementieva.

"She's a great player," Dementieva said, "and it's just amazing how well she played after this break."

Williams wore the tank top and hot pants she refers to as her Wonder Woman ensemble, and she looked the part, winning 12 consecutive points early to take control and running off 11 consecutive games.

The last top woman to win a title in her first tournament following a layoff of at least six months was Monica Seles, who was sidelined more than two years after being stabbed and won her first comeback event in Toronto in 1995.

"I used her as inspiration," Williams said. "I thought, 'If Monica can do it, maybe I can at least win a few rounds.'"

Williams encountered little resistance on her way to the women's title, partly because the field was unusually weak. She slipped to sixth in the rankings during her layoff and benefited at Key Biscayne from the absence of all five players ranked ahead of her, including No. 1 Justine Henin-Hardenne of Belgium, the last player to beat Williams.

Also missing was Belgian Kim Clijsters, who spent three months at No. 1 last year. Dementieva upset Venus Williams in the quarterfinals to spoil a potential all-Williams final. *AP*

Williams welcomes Navratilova back

MIAMI—Serena Williams has welcomed Martina Navratilova, 47, back into the singles fold.

Navratilova has been handed a wildcard for next week's Bausch and Lomb Championships at Amelia Island, Florida.

She will also play singles and doubles at the Family Circle Cup in Charleston, South Carolina, starting on April 12.

Williams, who will be at both tournaments, said: "If you can do it, you should do it. She's an unbelievable athlete (and) an unbelievable person. I think she'll win a few rounds.

"She keeps me motivated. When I'm 47 I hope I can be standing, let alone competing on a professional level with professional athletes."

Navratilova played her first singles match as a professional in 1973 and her last in 1994. She returned to the circuit in 2000 to play doubles. *AFP*

Much ado about Adu as teen sensation debuts

ADU: It was fun. REUTERS

WASHINGTON—Freddy Adu didn't score. He didn't even have a good run with the ball. He was just there for the most part, and that was enough to make history.

Adu became the youngest athlete in a major American league in more than 100 years Saturday, entering the game in the 61st minute of D.C. United's 2-1 victory over the defending champion San Jose Earthquakes in the MLS season opener.

The 14-year-old Adu ran onto the field to thunderous cheers and chants of "Freddy, Freddy!" Flashbulbs popped around RFK Stadium as Adu replaced—and got a hug from—Alecko Eskandarian.

"It was fun," Adu said. "I was glad I went through this, that I experienced this. It's something I'm going to remember for a long time."

But Adu took no shots and got few touches in open space during his time on the field, unable to show off the creativity and talent that has made him a prodigy.

The one exception came in the 84th minute, when Adu dribbled one-on-one on a break against longtime United States defender Jeff Agoos. The 35-year-old defender held his ground, however, and Adu flopped to the turf at the edge of the penalty box, making a meager and fruitless plea for a foul.

Adu played as a forward most of the time, but he drifted back to an attacking midfield position on occasion.

Adu's debut created interest never before seen in the history of the nine-year old league. Reporters from Europe and Asia claimed some of the 250 media credentials issued for the match. Adu has already appeared on national television shows, and his salary is a league-high $500,000.

"We never expected that it would turn into Freddie-mania," commissioner Don Garber said before the game, "that this guy would have the personality that he has, to be as comfortable as he is in front of the cameras, be such a crossover so soon. He seems to really thrive with the attention."

United sold out the game at RFK Stadium's MLS-downsized capacity of 24,603. The stadium holds 53,000, but United has closed the upper deck this season to create a greater demand for tickets and encourage advanced sales. *AP*

GRAND NATIONAL. Richard Johnson (center) is unseated by his mount What's Up Boys at Beeches Brook watched by Leighton Aspell who was on Skycab during the Grand National at Aintree, Liverpool, Saturday. Donald "Ginger" McCain, the trainer steeped in Grand National folklore thanks to Red Rum's three triumphs in the 1970s, won the race for the fourth time with Amberleigh House. Story on A32. REUTERS

Mitchell retains IBF crown

MANCHESTER, England—Sharmba Mitchell knocked down Mike Stewart three times and retained his interim IBF junior welterweight title by unanimous decision Saturday night in an all-American fight at the MEN Arena.

Mitchell used a stinging right jab and big left hand to dominate the 12-round fight from start to finish and improve his record to 54-3.

He opened a cut under Stewart's left eye in the second round and floored him with left shots in the fourth, fifth and ninth rounds.

A computer count showed that Mitchell landed 186 of 500 punches, compared with 87 of 378 for Stewart.

The judges scored the fight 117-109, 120-106 and 120-105 for Mitchell. *AP*

Art Long should reflect on his court behavior

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

AS a longtime PBA fan, I suppose I can complain. How come temperamental import Art Long of San Miguel Beer only got a measly fine of P20,000 after it was confirmed that he indeed attacked Marlou Aquino of Sta. Lucia Realty on the way to the dugout at halftime during the recent SMB-Sta. Lucia game at the Big Dome?

His latest misconduct, witnessed by many, is doing the Philippine Basketball Association (and the San Miguel team as well) more harm than good. PBA Commissioner Noli Eala should send the message that misdeeds such as Long's will not be tolerated. Long should be fined more heavily—if not suspended indefinitely—for conduct not worth emulating by the Filipino people. His repeated unsportsmanlike behavior is something the public wouldn't want to see.

There is no question that Long is one of the best imports in the PBA right now, but exemplary he is not. I say this because truly exemplary players do not have to commit repeated temper tantrums on the playing court.

Two years ago during a San Miguel Beer-Red Bull game in the Commissioner's Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome, Long figured in an ugly incident by punching Red Bull import Tony Lang and threatening to throw a chair at the crowd. The ill-tempered Long was sent home as a result and replaced by Terquin Mott, a *balik*-import. However, Mott also figured in a similar display of bad temper when he slammed the ball on Lang's head and, on their way to the dugout of the Big Dome, assaulted the Red Bull import.

Earlier during the San Miguel-Sta. Lucia encounter in the Governors' Cup, also in 2002 at the Big Dome, SMB imports Lamonth Strothers and Mario Bennett lost their cool. In full view of the fans and those watching the game on television, Strother tried to attack Realtor Gerald Francisco, chased and cursed referee Franco Ilagan, threw the ball to the upper box section of the coliseum and took off his jersey. Bennet also joined his angry teammate by likewise taking off his shirt. Both hotheads were subsequently ejected from the court.

As I have said before, thee hotheaded imports have no place in the PBA because of their bloated egos, rudeness and arrogance. In the beginning these imports generated widespread interest in the way they dominated the local basketball scene. The media hype even made them more popular with the cage-batty Filipinos, adding life to the pro league which was then falling on hard times. But they eventually became more of a problem instead of a solution. Their repeated obnoxious conduct only proved that they are nothing but pampered and highly paid athletes who are playing here mainly for the big bucks which they would otherwise not earn in the United States and Europe. And to make matters worse, they usually look down upon native Filipinos. Even outside the playing court, some imports got involved in disco fights and sexual abuses against Filipino women. And that is on record.

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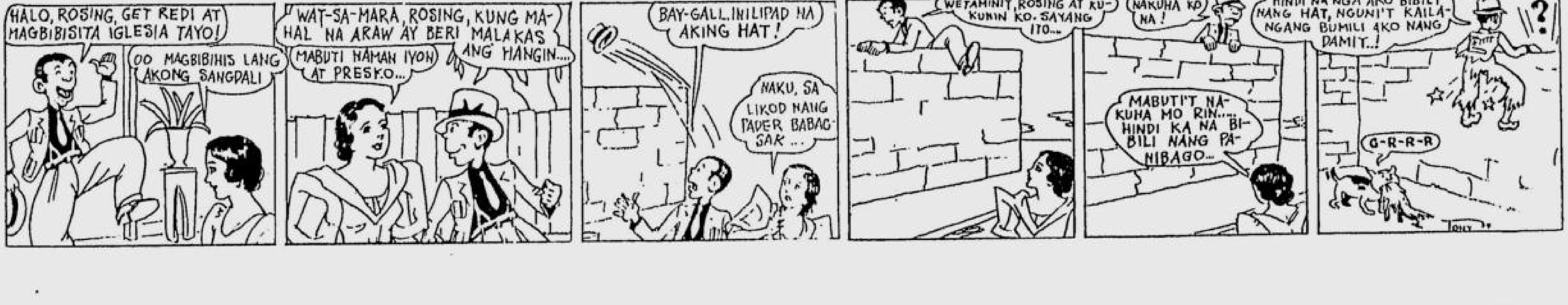
A SALUTE TO THE CHAMPS. Dance athletes Jojie and Jonah del Rosario shone the brightest in the just-ended 2004 Dance Sport Council of the Philippines First Quarter Ranking and Competitions at the Philsports Arena. DSCP president Becky Garcia said the Del Rosario tandem won three gold medals, namely, the Standard D, Stander E and Standard Special Event 1 in the dancefest which is part of the country's preparations for next year's SEA Games. Sharing the winners' podium by bagging two gold medals each were PSA awardees Rener Mercado and Judith Anne Melencio, the country's undisputed youth Latin champions; Jerswin and Anne Poloyapoy and the Oliver Ian Gutierrez-Luningning Kucharys dance couple.... Congrats to Spring Cooking Oil Executive and shooting champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla, son of Olympic shooter Tom Ong. Aside from shooting where he is well-known, the young businessman is now making waves in the sport of basketball. Recently, Spring Cooking Oil-San Pablo 7 Lakers owned by Tac Padilla and Mayor Florante Aquino won the Panasonic Cup-7 Lakes invitational cage championship by beating Manila-Adamson University, 80-73, in the title showdown.

***

EMERGING COCKFIGHTING TALENT. Kudos to the emerging cockfighting talent of 2004, Joe Mojeno of Negros Occidental. A protege of renowned cocker-breeder Ramon Lacson, Mojeno recently won the solo championship of the Slasher Cup ng Masa 6-Cock Derby hosted by World Slasher champion and tabloid executive Rey Briones at the popular Roligon Mega Cockpit. It's good to know that provincial cocker-breeders can beat their city rivals and win the cash-rich derbies in the Big City. Welcome to the club.

KENKOY KLASIKS by Tony Velasquez celebrating 75 years

1934 A History of Komiks / Courtesy of KOMIKS CAFE / INQ EDITION 4.05.04



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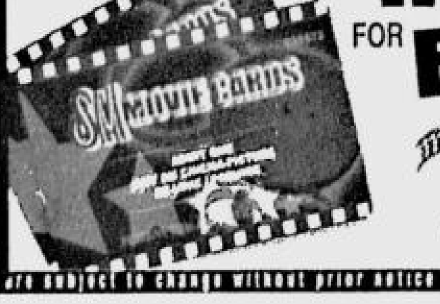

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Reality Combat tourney slated

THE HEAT is on this April as the 4th Universal Reality Combat Championship (URCC) gets under way on April 24 at 7 p.m. at the Casino Filipino Ampitheater in Parañaque City.

Dubbed "URCC4 Return to the Dungeon," the event will showcase 15 action-packed fights with five title bouts.

The main event will feature Charlie Angel of the Way of the Champions and Richard Lasprilla of Deftac Jiu-Jitsu. They will be vying for the flyweight title. Lasprilla is undefeated in the URCC series.

Another fight to look out for is the fight between Caloy Baduria (Boxing) and Mike Banayad (Suntokan Todo Bakbakan). They will be battling for the welterweight title. Other title fights scheduled for the evening are the featherweight title bout between Rolando Pritos (Phil. Kamao) and Louie Sangalang (Deftac Sari-An); the heavyweight bout between Ravinder Sogi (Rage Gym) and TJ Tiu (Freestyle Wrestling) and the bantamweight title bout between Aden Zarco (Strikes & Submissions) and Gary Garay (Garay Fighting Method). Winners will also receive P10,000.

The URCC is the pioneer mixed martial arts tournament in the country. Organized by martial artist and promoter Alvin Aguilar, the URCC is a system of fighting which incorporates stand-up and ground techniques for no holds barred competitions. In these kind of events, groups from different disciplines can be found competing against one another. These disciplines include jiu-jitsu, boxing, taekwondo, karate, kungfu, kickboxing, muay thai, freestyle fighting, savate and pancrase.

"We'd like to educate the public about this sport because it's even safer than boxing," Aguilar said. "So far, there have been no deaths in relation to mixed martial arts."

Aguilar is an instructor of jiu-jitsu, sarian, yaw-yan and pekiti tirsia. He also trained US Marines in knife fighting in the recent *balikatan* exercises. He also runs the Red Corner Gym in Makati, Quezon City, Sucat and Manila. Aguilar has also been inducted into the united Martial Arts Hall of Fame in Texas, United States, for his efforts to spread the sport of mixed martial arts.

Tickets for the URCC Return to the Dungeon are available at all Red Corner establishments (867-8059) and at Karsten Productions, Unit 26 PC, Eisenhower Condominium, Greenhills (721-3749 or 721-6809).

For more details, visit www.urcc.net.

IMPORTS CHAMPIONSHIP

Classy Key Apo holds off Neat Laurel

KEY Apo (4) shows the way as Royal Catch (1), Time Gentleman and Neat Laurel try to keep pace. JESS YUSON

By Edwin Villanueva

KEY Apo survived Neat Laurel's late charge to win the opening leg of the Philracom Imported Championship Series yesterday at the Santa Ana Park.

The dark bay colt owned by Marho chief Aristeo "Putch" Puyat overcame a sluggish break and an early challenge from Neat Laurel's coupled bet, Royal Catch, before reserving enough strength down the wire to score the victory in front of a big afternoon crowd.

"*Di pa nakakapag*-settle *sa* gate *nang biglang largahan. Buti naman naka*-recover *agad* (He has yet to settle down when the gates suddenly opened. It's good he recovered in time)," said Antonio Alcasid Jr., Key Apo's regular rider.

Royal Catch denied Key Apo the rail in the early going but the latter effortlessly dispatched Jeff Zarate's mount at the backside and roared toward the home turn with a four-length margin.

Neat Laurel dug in under punishment from John Cordero after rallying from fourth and last but came up short as Key Apo hit the payoff wire a full length clear of the Hermie Esguerra entry.

A Southern Hemisphere-bred 4-year-old galloper by Perugino (USA) out of Affotee (USA), Key Apo picked up P270,000 after nailing down his fourth win in five runs, all at the Makati racetrack.

"He still needs seasoning," Puyat said of his prized import trained by Juan "Johnny" Sordan.

Neat Laurel got P101,250, third placer Time Gentleman received P56,250, while Royal Catch settled for P22,500 after arriving fourth.

"*Nataranta sa* gate *kaya medyo masama ang alis* (He got rattled at the gate that's why he started slowly)," said Sordan, Puyat's longtime thoroughbred conditioner.

Key Apo, who clocked 1:31.8 (14.5-24-24.5-28.5), attracted P861,060 in sales out of P1,129,984 as the outstanding favorite.

Philracom chair Jimmy Dilag awarded the winner's trophies to Puyat and Sordan. Also on hand at the awards rites were commissioner Eduardo Domingo Jr. and Vergel Cruz.

Earlier, Ma Cherie (Mushi Mushi-Speed Angel) scored a wire-to-wire victory in the first of two Gawad Kalinga Foundation Cups under the guidance of Jonathan Hernandez.

Later in the day, Hernandez made it a double in the GKF race by piloting Arriba King to a similar flagpole-to-finish win.

Both the winners got P240,000.

PUYAT (left) receives the winner's trophy from Chairman Dilag. JESS YUSON

Amberleigh House wins National

LIVERPOOL, England—Amberleigh House won the Grand National steeplechase by three lengths at Aintree on Saturday, giving trainer Ginger McCain a long-awaited victory.

Amberleigh House, a 16-1 shot ridden by Graham Lee, pulled ahead after the final hurdle to beat Clan Royal in the 157th edition of the race. Lord Atterbury was two lengths back in third.

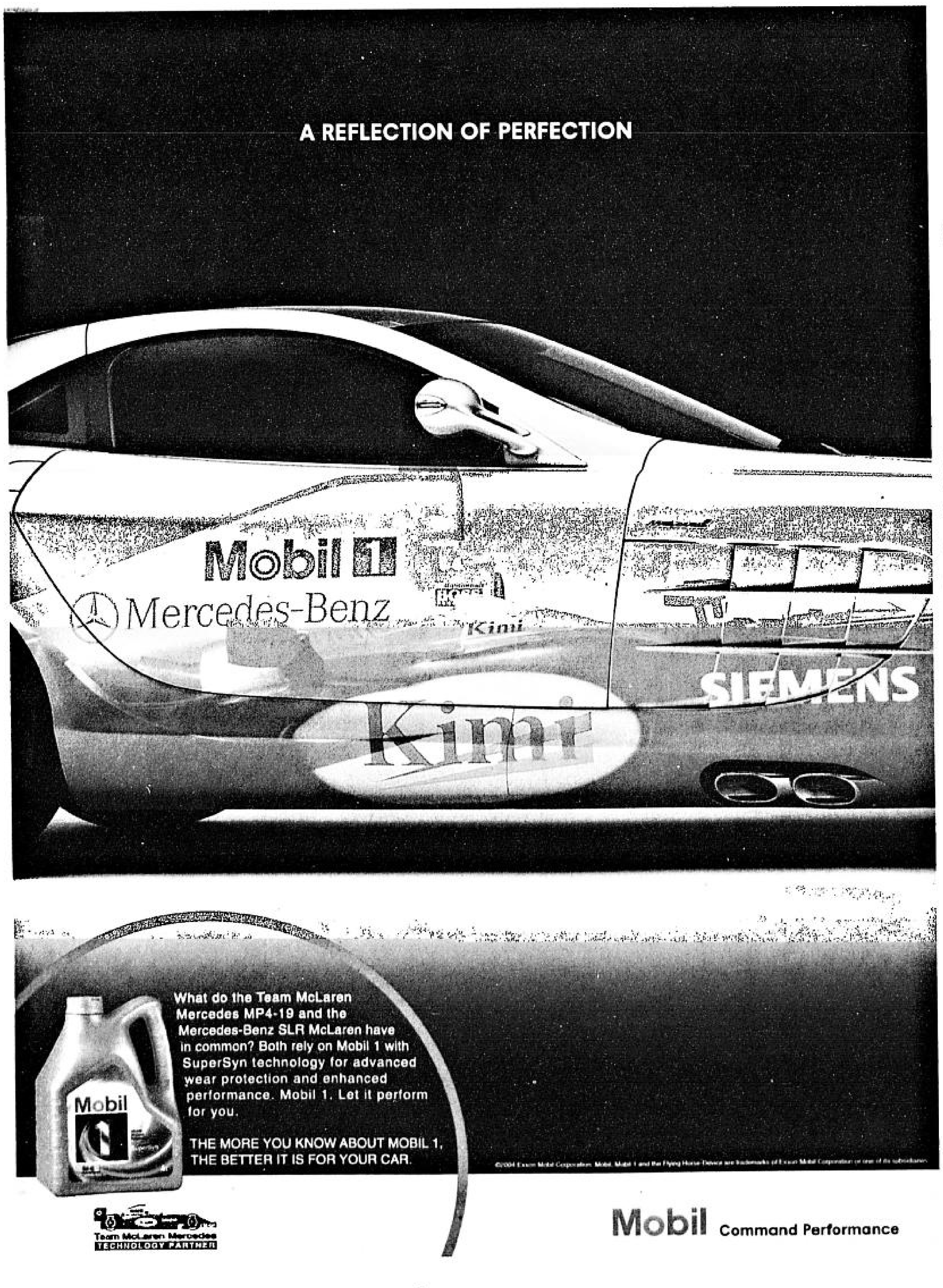
"I never thought I was going to win another National," said McCain, who last trained a winner 27 years ago with Red Rum, the only three-time champion of the Grand National.

"He was foot-perfect. He's a professional. He's the best thing that has happened to me for a long, long time."

Lee was in disbelief.

"It's just a fairytale, a dream," Lee said.

Amberleigh House finished third last year to Monty's Pass, which finished fourth on Saturday. *AP*



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THUMBS UP

Jockey Mike Smith aboard Azeri gives a thumbs up after winning the $500,000 Apple Blossom Handicap Saturday at Oaklawn Park in Hot Springs, Ark. Azeri led wire to wire to win the race for a third straight year. AP

Schumacher tallies 73rd career victory

SAKHIR, Bahrain—Michael Schumacher won his third straight race of the season Sunday, taking the inaugural Bahrain Grand Prix for his 73rd career victory.

Schumacher led from the pole and never faltered, taking command on the new US$150-million desert track. Light rain fell just before the start, but circuit conditions were nearly perfect despite fears of blowing sand and dust at the new layout.

Schumacher clocked 1 hour, 28 minutes 34.575 seconds for 57 laps on the 5.417-km (3.367-mile) course. The race was nearly incident free despite the unfamiliar track with temperatures about 30C (86F) at the start.

Second went to Ferrari teammate Rubens Barrichello, who was 1.3 seconds behind, only because Schumacher slowed after leading by 10 seconds entering the final lap.

The next finishers were: Jenson Button of BAR-Honda, Jarno Trulli of Renault, Takuma Sato of BAR-Honda, Fernando Alonso of Renault, Ralf Schumacher of Williams and Mark Webber of Jaguar.

It was the second straight third-place finish for Button.

The 35-year-old German leads the points standings with 30 points followed by Barrichello (21) and Button (15). *AP*

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Tax rules too complicated—PCCI survey

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUSINESS sector has expressed dissatisfaction over the country's tax system, saying some tax rules are complicated and a burden to business operations.

In a survey conducted by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry last December, 51 percent of the respondents consider the procedures of the Bureau of Internal Revenue "too difficult." The complicated rules, they said, were partly to blame for the noncompliance with the tax laws by some companies.

The survey covered 83 companies belonging to the PCCI, one of the country's biggest business organizations.

Some of the things that companies found too complicated were the procedures for requesting and getting tax refund and tax credits, undergoing audit, requesting for BIR rulings, and applying for tax relief.

About 62 percent of the respondents said the cost they were shouldering for complying with the country's tax rules was "unreasonable." Only 22 percent said it was reasonable, while 12 percent believed that the cost they incurred in complying with the tax system was neither reasonable nor unreasonable.

With the complicated rules and procedures in complying with the country's tax laws, 25 percent of the respondent-companies believed that more than 50 percent of corporate taxpayers were not complying with the rules, while 20 percent estimated that 41 percent to 50 percent of the taxpayers were non-compliant. About 13 percent of the respondents said only 21-30 percent of the firms were not complying with the tax laws.

Some of the reasons cited for tax delinquency, aside from complicated procedures, were the dire need of some companies to survive in a competitive market, lenient penalties imposed by the BIR on tax cheats, inability of the government to go after tax evaders, and ignorance of tax laws.

Believing that the BIR could do a lot more to improve its performance, 46 percent of the respondents gave the BIR a "poor" rating in terms of providing services to the public, while 23 percent gave the BIR a rating of "satisfactory." About 20 percent gave the BIR a "very poor," rating while 6 percent gave it a "good" rating.

Almost all, 96 percent, of the respondents said they believed that graft and corruption was prevalent in the BIR.

In response to the survey results, Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said the BIR admitted there were still a lot of things to do to improve its performance. He added, however, that the revenue agency has already started implementing programs that were aimed at improving the its services to the public.

Last year, the BIR introduced the electronic filing and payment system (EFPS), which allows

TAX/ B4

PARAYNO

Boeing seen putting up facility in Clark

By Clarissa S. Batino

BOEING Co., the world's largest aircraft maker, is holding exploratory talks with Clark Airport authorities for a possible lease agreement involving an 80-hectare government property in the former US military air base.

Government officials said Boeing was scouting for a space to house its regional maintenance facility.

Putting up a regional logistics and maintenance office in Clark is becoming very attractive to the US firm due to its proximity to potential clients like the Philippine government and two foreign cargo carriers.

Adelberto Yap, president and chief executive officer of the Clark International Airport Corp., said the US aircraft manufacturer would like to cash-in on the $150-million modernization program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines which is funded by the US government.

The US assistance covers the repair of local military aircraft like the C-130s, which Boeing wants to undertake.

If Boeing's plans push through, the US firm's investment could equal the estimated $450 million that Federal Express would be spending for the building of its Asia Pacific hub in Clark, according to Yap.

"Boeing is also interested in servicing the aircraft of FedEx and UPS (United Parcel Service)," said the Clark airport official. FedEx and UPS, two of the world's biggest freight carriers, have existing regional facilities in the Philippines.

Yap said executives from Boeing's headquarters in Seattle were expected to arrive after the Holy Week to inspect the site, specifically the east wing of the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport.

"Boeing wants to build its logistic maintenance center on the east side wing. It is interested in about 80 hectares of the property there," said the Clark airport president.

Yap is scheduled to fly to Memphis, Tennessee, to sign a 25-year lease agreement with FedEx officials on April 11. FedEx is leasing a 50-hectare property in Clark where it will put up a $450-million facility that will become Fedex's regional hub once its 12-year contract with the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority expires in 2007.

The airport official said FedEx had chosen Clark over the 18-billion yuan airport in Guangzhou, China as the site of its regional facility after 2007. FedEx plans to start moving in to the Clark property before 2007 while it is gradually scaling down operations in Subic, Yap said.

Clark airport has two parallel 3.2-kilometer runways, which

BOEING/ B6

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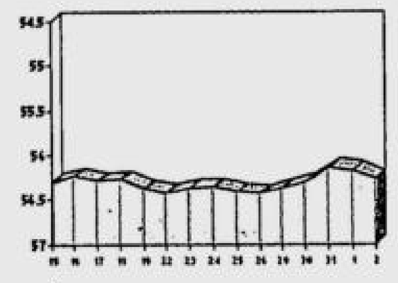


MARCH APRIL

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 56.275 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., April 2, 2004

¥ 104.18= $ 1

As of 5 p.m., April 2, 2004

GOLD: $424.50-425.00

per ounce Hong Kong, April 2, 2004

April 2, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.808538	1.000000	56.1710
Japan	Yen	0.007796	0.009642	0.5416
United Kingdom	Pound	1.501860	1.857500	104.3376
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.103824	0.128409	7.2129
Switzerland	Franc	0.640173	0.791766	44.4743
Canada	Dollar	0.619238	0.765873	43.0199
Singapore	Dollar	0.484068	0.598695	33.6293
Australia	Dollar	0.618953	0.765521	43.0001
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.145802	2.653928	149.0738
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.215616	0.266674	14.9793
Brunei	Dollar	0.482623	0.596908	33.5289
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000117	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020663	0.025556	1.4355
UAE	Dirham	0.220154	0.272287	15.2946
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.236800	69.4723
Argentina	Peso	0.283946	0.351185	19.7264
Brazil	Real	0.279771	0.346021	19.4363
Denmark	Kroner	0.134271	0.166066	9.3281
India	Rupee	0.018673	0.023095	1.2973
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.212802	0.263193	14.7838
Mexico	New Peso	0.072236	0.089342	5.0184
New Zealand	Dollar	0.539709	0.667512	37.4948
Norway	Kroner	0.118612	0.146699	8.2402
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014148	0.017498	0.9829
South Africa	Rand	0.128110	0.158446	8.9001
Korea	Won	0.000709	0.000877	0.0493
Sweden	Kroner	0.108390	0.134057	7.5301
Syria	Pound	0.018326	0.022665	1.2731
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024658	0.030497	1.7130
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000422	0.000522	0.0293

INTEREST RATES

April 02, 2004-MART1 Rates Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 2-Apr-04	MART1 1-Apr-04
1 Month	8.1654	8.1461
3 Months	8.4732	8.4625
6 Months	9.2339	9.2214
1 Year	9.9661	9.9633
2 Years	10.6661	10.6567
3 Years	11.3558	11.3536
4 Years	11.6577	11.6482
5 Years	12.1571	12.1583
7 Years	12.4357	12.4268
10 Years	12.6411	12.6125
20 Years	13.1089	12.9941
25 Years	13.3536	13.2583

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

STOCK MARKET

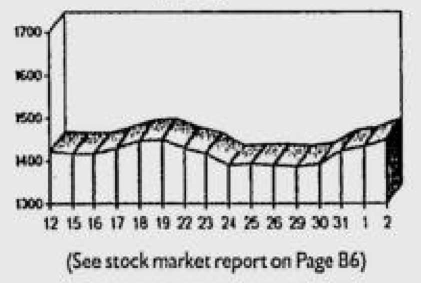
Sluggish trading seen

IF you want to write off this week as a sluggish week, go ahead, said stock analysts of the shortened trading session ahead of the long Lenten holidays.

The Philippine Stock Exchange will be closed for trading starting Wednesday for the Holy Week and will resume buying and selling sessions Monday the following week.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

MARCH



(See stock market report on Page B6)

Analysts are looking at a lull until Tuesday while investors look for a "good excuse" to either sell stocks or buy more for the long-term.

Last week was not impressive, said analysts further, with low stock prices and favorable trends in the government's revenue collections managing to buoy stock market activity.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange composite index was higher 60 points week-on-week to 1,450.91, gaining 4.3 percent.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) hit its revenue collection target in March after missing its goals in January and February, Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said late last week. The BIR said preliminary collection figures for March totaled P32.3 billion, versus a target of P32.19 billion.

Parayno earlier said that the better than expected collection in March was attributed to bigger contributions of the BIR's Large Taxpayers' Division and some provincial offices.

The preliminary figure for the month brings the BIR's January-March collection to P97.67 billion, about P4 billion short of the target of P101.08 billion.

In January, the BIR fell short of its goal of P38.44 billion, collecting only P36.54 billion. In February it collected P28.83 billion, also short of its target of P30.45 billion.

The BIR earlier said it was optimistic it could still meet or even surpass its full-year collection target of P477 billion despite the missed goals in January and February. It said January and February were usually lean months, and collections normally began catching up in April, when many taxpayers remit their income tax payments.

The BIR, which accounts for over 80 percent of the government's total revenue, is hard-pressed to improve its revenue collection to ease

SLUGGISH/ B6

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Ispat to put up blast furnace in Iligan to meet China demand

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MUMBAI, India—Ispat Industries Ltd. plans to put up a blast furnace in the former National Steel Corp. facility in Iligan City within three years to fuel China's steel-hungry construction boom.

A blast furnace melts and mixes minerals to produce hot metal, which is then turned into steel.

The NSC plant currently relies on imported steel, which it processes into steel products.

NSC, now known as Global Steelworks International Inc., is the newest item in Ispat's shopping cart after a series of acquisitions that started last year.

Since 2003, Ispat—which means "steel" in Hindi— bought facilities in Libya, Bosnia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

The Iligan plant was acquired earlier this year for some P13 billion.

Ramesh Bhosale, a director of Ispat group's holding company Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd., said in an interview that Ispat's acquisitions were made to make its global operations cost-effective.

According to a Philippine government official privy to the matter, Global Steelworks had committed to deliver the bulk of the Iligan plant's output for the first three years to China.

Bhosale, for his part, said the Iligan steel plant was ideally suited for the "currently prominent" China market primarily due to its proximity.

Aloysius Lobo, Ispat deputy general manager for corporate communications, said "the expansion to the Philippines is a strategic move. (The Iligan plant) is not a trophy acquisition."

Both Bhosale and Lobo pointed out that Global Steelworks's thrust was to enhance cost-effective and efficient production, as is the case with Ispat's flagship facility—an integrated steel complex at Dolvi in Maharashtra state, a two-hour boat ride from this city.

Philamlife expects 16% profit growth in '04

By Doris C. Dumlao

DESPITE the difficult business environment, the Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co. (Philamlife) expects to end the year with a 16 percent profit growth on the back of a 15-20 percent increase in gross revenue.

"We expect new challenges this year, particularly with the continuing weakness of the Philippine economy, the low interest rate environment and political uncertainties brought about by the 2004 elections," Philamlife president and CEO Jose Cuisia Jr. said in a press briefing.

"However, we are optimistic that we will have another good year in 2004, bolstered by continued product and service innovation and our reputation for being among the most stable and financially strong companies in the country," he added.

Philamlife chalked up P4.4 billion in net income in 2003, about 50 percent better than the previous year, fueled by record sales and non-recurring gains from unloaded stocks and bonds.

The largest and most diversified insurance company in the Philippines booked P900 million in extra-ordinary gains from some investments liquidated last year.

"We are a major contributor to the country's development through our diverse investments, which totaled P81.47 billion in 2003," Cuisia said.

He said Philamlife posted P2.5 billion in gross extra-ordinary gains last year from the sale of dollar-denominated Philippine bonds, fixed rate treasury notes and some equities but likewise had to write off certain investments, leaving P900 million in net non-recurring gains.

RP seen meeting domestic demand for coffee by 2013

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINES should be able to meet its own demand for coffee by 2013.

The National Coffee Development Board, however, said the private sector should come into the industry and infuse at least P300 million to plant 6,000 hectares of trees annually to meet the goal.

According to the board's 10-year plan, local coffee demand would be met by local producers by 2013, starting with the 20-percent growth in production last year.

From 21,000 metric tons (MT) of coffee produced last year, board officer Pacita Juan said the board expected this to increase by another 20 percent to 25,000 MT this year.

Coffee demand, on the other hand, is placed at 55,000 MT, increasing at a pace of 2.6 percent to 3 percent annually.

The 30,000 MT supply deficit is filled up by imports from Indonesia and Vietnam. Most of the demand comes from the instant coffee sector.

Imports would continue unless more private firms infuse much-needed capital in coffee farming, Nestle Philippines Inc. assistant vice president Glicerio Joel Lumagbas said in a separate interview.

He said a large scale coffee-planting program was necessary.

This program would entail the planting of coffee trees in at least 6,000 hectares of land each year, with each hectare needing around P50,000 in investments.

"We need more capital. We're hoping that the government will also make available some funds for the industry. We're now talking to five to six big planters in Mindanao. We need to attract more private sector players," he said.

Juan said the government should also look into providing tariff protection to local coffee producers.

Deutsche Regis top PSE trader in 1st quarter

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

DEUTSCHE Regis was the top trader in the first three months of the year, a poll by the Philippine Stock Exchange showed.

Out of P99 billion worth of trades for the first quarter, Deutsche Regis raked in 23.3 percent of total trades.

UBS Securities Philippines came in second with 14 percent of trades while Singapore-based ATR-Kim Eng Securities Inc. ranked third with 6.6 percent.

Local firm Philippine Equity Partners placed fourth with 6 percent of trades from January to March followed by CLSA Philippines with 5.8 percent.

ING Securities Philippines was sixth in rank with 5.21 percent followed by local broker SB Equities Inc. with 3.65 percent.

Other brokers that made it to the top 20 brokers included Abacus Securities Corp., Asiasec Equities Inc., ABN Amro Asia Securities, DBP Daiwa Securities, BPI Securities, AB Capital Securities, Wealth Securities, Multi-Grade Securities, The First Resources Management & Securities Corp. and Angping & Associates.

Down and dirty in Mindanao

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

LAST March 9, 2004, Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr., again honored Mindanao with his presence, this time to speak before representatives of key sectors in the agriculture industry, during the Mindanao Agri Leaders Forum.

It was an event facilitated by the Mindanao Fruit Industry Development Council (MinFruit), in coordination with the DA Regional Field Unit-XI.

Initial preparations were made during my term as chair of the Mindanao Business Council, but the event was followed through by the MinFruit, which (being part of the agri industry) would have more imprimatur to undertake such an event.

For this, I congratulate Antonio Partoza Jr., MinFruit president, Enrico Dayanghirang, who was the forum convenor, DA Undersecretary "Tetchie" Capellan and Director Roger Chio, DA-XI regional executive director, for providing Mindanao farmers and producers the opportunity to air their concerns to the agriculture secretary.

But going back to Secretary Lorenzo.

I have lost count of the number of times Cito—as fellow Davaoeños fondly call him—has visited Mindanao in his official capacity. Actually, "visit" is too weak a word to define how he has made his presence felt here in the land of his birth.

With sleeves literally rolled, he has set about doing his task to improve the state of our agriculture and our farmers, with no qualms if he should be muddied in the process—literally and figuratively.

His strong stance to curb technical smuggling, his unequivocal support for local farm producers and even his unapologetic position in the Doha Round of WTO talks have caused some quarters to file cases against him or accuse him of being anti-corporate business.

Nonetheless, he is seemingly unfazed by the mudslinging, his hide as rough and callused as the common *tao* he loves so much. I'm sure that we do not need to be reminded of Cito's privileged background. With the Lorenzo family name, he does not need the flak or the burdens of public office.

And yet, despite having been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he does not mind being out in the blistering heat with the farmers, digging his hands into the soil of the earth and giving himself wholly to the people.

No disrespect meant to the Lorenzo family, but I would like to share a thought. I can imagine Cito as a young boy asking permission from his parents to play with the children of poor farmers instead of keeping indoors, wanting to shed his expensive shoes for the chance to feel the earth with bare feet, scrambling up the back of a carabao for a ride in the fields, never mind if the animal's muddy backside soils his designer shorts.

Oh, of course, he wouldn't get sunstroke because his yaya would be right behind him with an umbrella. Levity aside, having come from the business community himself, Cito sees the value in private sector partnership. He realizes that there has to be synergy between the government and the stakeholders.

This is why he never fails to grace events, such as the annual Mindanao Food Congresses, Mindanao Business Conferences and the recent Mindanao Agri Leaders Forum, so that he may hear firsthand the concerns of the people.

This is why the DA has institutionalized private sector collaboration in the programs that it implements.

He encouraged the private sector to form very focused working boards—the National Corn Board, Swine Board, Rice and Grains Board and the Coffee Board to better address the gaps that require intervention for the sector to further expand and increase production and market share.

During my term as MBC chair, Secretary Lorenzo was always a partner, even when some members of the business sector, who were adversely affected by some corrective measures, were not wont to be diplomatic about their criticisms.

Ever calm and composed behind the podium, his face would register understanding. "Please be patient, but our plan is..."

As to his special interest in Mindanao, clearly it reflects his belief that Mindanao is the premier player in Philippine agriculture, and that our island needs the most attention in terms of improving agricultural production.

I know I am sounding like a campaign manager for Cito, but for the record, he is not running for any elective position.

I would not want him to run for senator or congressman because I want him where he is right now, where he is supposed to be, and where he is doing the most good. And that is as secretary of agriculture.

Let me end this piece by quoting something I heard him say: "I believe the secretary's office is where it interfaces with the farmers and fisherfolk. It is not inside an air-conditioned room. It is out in the field, and finding solutions to help raise income, create jobs, assure food security and also providing confidence and hope in our people."

And that, in a nutshell, is Cito's principle as public official. For all intents and purposes, he has put that silver spoon away and used the money for the farmers.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is the former Mindanao Business Council chair and a strong advocate for the region's development.)

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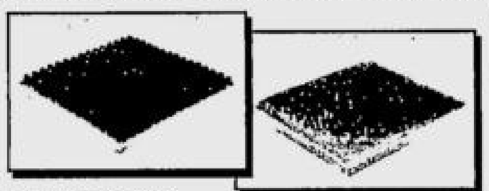

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

DATE : April 23, 2004 (Friday)
TIME : 4:00 P.M.
PLACE : Manila AB Room, Ground Floor
MAKATI SHANGRI-LA HOTEL
Ayala Avenue Corner
Makati Avenue, Makati City

Attention: Shareholders of Philex Mining Corporation

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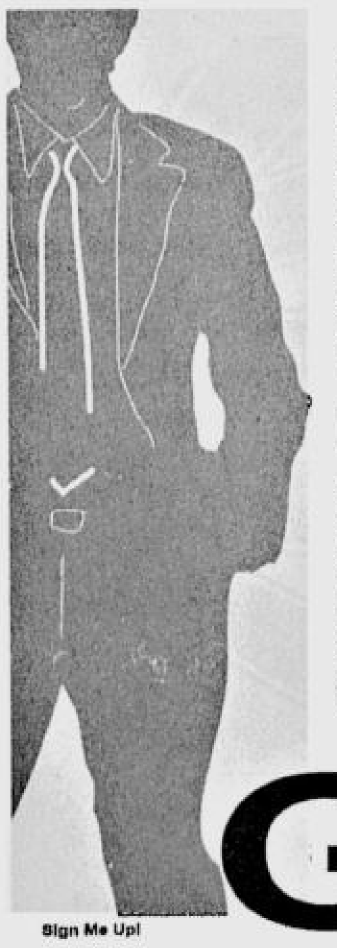

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2 Techniques To Be In Peak Performance
3 "First Who, Then What"
4. Hiring Tips To Recruit Disciplined People
5 Making Filipino Cultural Traits Work For You

1 Part 2
2 Practices To Confront the Brutal Facts
3 Building Red Flag Mechanisms
4 Single Most Important Skill to Learn in Life
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6 Steps To Positive Change

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Franco del Rosario
Speaker

Franco del Rosario is chairman of the 2004 Management Association of the Philippines Annual CEO Conference. He was chairman as well in 2003

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RP to keep rice tariffs

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES has informed the World Trade Organization that it would maintain its high tariffs on rice to protect the farm sector.

Edsel Custodio, the Philippines' permanent representative to the WTO, said in his formal notice to the WTO Secretariat and other WTO members that the country was again invoking provisions of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture to maintain its quantitative restrictions (QRs) on rice imports.

Maintaining the country's QRs on rice imports means that the Philippines will prohibit the free-for-all importation of rice.

In addition, rice imports would be slapped a 100 percent tariff except for imports by the state-run trading firm National Food Authority to build the country's buffer stocks.

As a WTO member, the Philippines needs to negotiate and justify its plan to keep the QRs with other WTO members.

This is because tariff barriers such as QRs, including those for agriculture products, are scheduled to be removed by July 2005.

"Other rice-producing countries like Thailand, Vietnam and India, who are also rice exporters trying to penetrate our market, may impose certain conditions and trade-offs for the Philippines to maintain the QRs," explained Agriculture Assistant Secretary Segfredo Serrano, who is also a member of the RP negotiating team to the WTO.

Serrano noted that the Philippines has until June 2005 to conduct all its negotiation meetings to defend its tough stance to keep its QRs on rice.

Keeping the QRs on rice means that the Philippine government is slowing down its agriculture trade liberalization to ensure the viability of Filipino farmers especially those engaged in rice farming.

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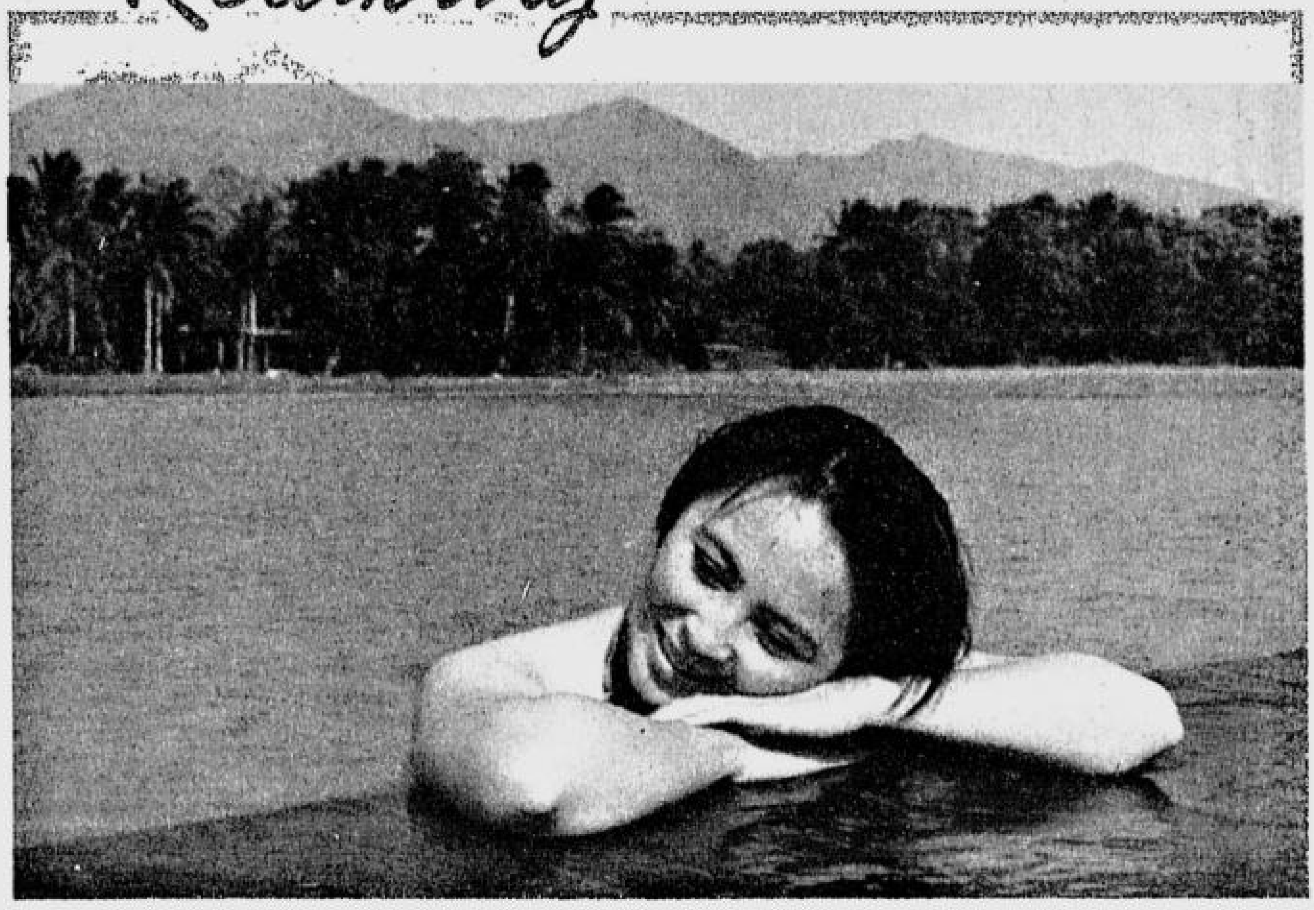

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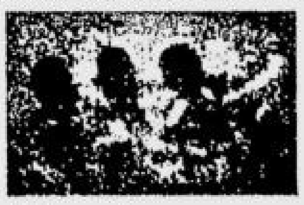

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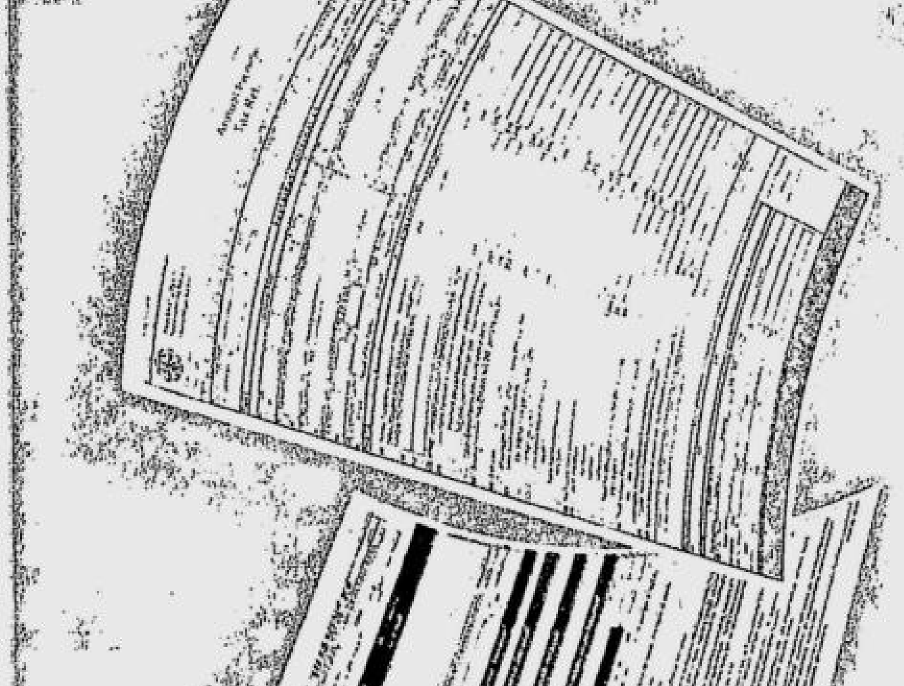

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Raul Concepcion's parliament

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

RAUL Concepcion, in a recent ad, strayed from his usual consumer advocacy to bat for a shift to a parliamentary form of government "patterned after the French model where the president is elected directly by the people but serves only a symbolic function."

I walked over to the French Embassy the other day. Press Attaché Benedicte Meyssan was kind enough to give me three pamphlets, The French Constitution, The National Assembly and The Institutions of the Fifth Republic. They have been interesting reading.

The French model Concepcion referred to could not have been the Constitution of today's Fifth Republic. This Constitution was written by Charles de Gaulle and overwhelmingly approved by the French in 1958. Except for a few minor amendments, the Constitution has remained essentially unchanged.

It is true the president is voted directly by the French. But his functions are far from symbolic. He is the commander in chief of the armed forces and the guarantor of national independence, territorial integrity and respect of treaties. He sees that the Constitution is respected and ensures the proper functioning of the public authorities and the continuity of the State. He is the guarantor of the independence of the judiciary and presides over the High Council of the Judiciary. By a stroke of the pen, he can dissolve the Parliament. Quite simply, the president is the dominant power in France.

The great de Gaulle surely would have vehemently turned down a presidency with symbolic functions only. Now, Concepcion heaps grave insult on the Filipino people by proposing that they vote for a president with the same symbolic functions.

Concepcion also said, "It is the members of the parliament (MPs) who vote for the prime minister. The PM, in turn, gets his cabinet members from among the MPs." In fact, the president appoints the prime minister. On the latter's recommendation, the President appoints the cabinet ministers who are not necessarily drawn from among the MPs.

The French Parliament is bicameral. The Lower House is called the National Assembly or Chamber of Deputies. The Upper House is also called the Senate.

Thus, the French Constitution contains elements of both parliamentary and presidential systems without fully belonging to either.

Concepcion claims that "in the last 25 years, the Philippines posted the lowest economic growth per person in all of Asia ... in the last 20 years, the number of poor Filipinos tripled, from 10 million to 30 million today ... in the last 10 years, the unemployment rate increased by half, from 8 percent to nearly 13 percent in 2003." As a result, he says, "the presidential system has failed to deliver the basic services to the people and to reduce poverty."

Having a deep cynicism towards what economists offer as data, I seriously doubt Concepcion's figures. But even assuming they are correct, were we not number one in Asia, next only to Japan, in economic terms, until 25 years ago? We did quite well under the presidential system all those past years. What went wrong? Was it not because Marcos monkeyed around with our presidential system?

Maybe, just maybe, a parliament is the best way to repair the damage. But, so far, the proponents have offered no comprehensive plan that can be studied and discussed. They keep repeating that our neighbors are supposedly more prosperous than we are (citing more economic data I find dubious) because they are under the parliamentary system. This argument just does not follow. It just does not wash.

Finally, to shift to a parliamentary form of government on the sketchy details (and inaccurate at that) such as Concepcion put forward in his ad is playing dice with the future of the Filipino people.

Tax rules . . .

From page B1

large taxpayers to file their tax returns and make their tax payments online.

The revenue agency likewise introduced last year the TIN Online, which allows taxpayers to apply for tax identification numbers through the Internet.

The BIR likewise said it had initiated measures that would increase tax collection, and thereby help the government ease it budget deficit. Such measures include the computerized auditing system, which is intended to better detect tax delinquency, and the tax mapping drive.

Under the tax mapping drive, BIR personnel are sent to field to check on the tax compliance of business establishments. Violators are imposed penalties and asked to rectify their mis-declared tax remittances.

Last year, the BIR collected P425.3 billion in revenue, exceeding its target of P424 billion. Last year was the first time in years that the revenue agency surpassed its collection goal.

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15 25 sqm, P 468,175 00
16.16 sqm, P 496.112 00
17.40 sqm, P 534,160 00
20 30 sqm, P 623.210 00
21 62 sqm, P 663,734 00
24.95 sqm P 766 ,272 00
29 19 sqm. P 896,133 00
32 15 sqm. P 987,005 00
35 10 sqm P 1 077,570 00
48 98 sqm P 1,371 816 00
51.10 sqm, P 1,492,120 00
103 48 sqm. P 3,021,816 00

Makati City
PALM TOWER
RESIDENTIAL UNITS
23 66 sqm, P 958,230 00
24 36 sqm, P 942,732 00
24 48 sqm. P 659,248 00
28 24 sqm, P 1,092,888 00
29.51 sqm, P 1,035,801 00
36.36 sqm, P 1,210 788 00
36 36 sqm P 1,338,048 00
42.65 sqm, P 1,415,980 00
43.20 sqm, P 1,516,320 00
50 18 sqm, P 1,846,624.00
75 15 sqm, P 2,630,250 00
107 04 sqm, P 3.371,760.00

Makati City
BILTMORE
RESIDENTIAL UNITS
72 40 sqm, P 4,199 200 00
72 40 sqm, P 4,409,160 00
72.40 sqm, P 4.199,200 00
82 60 sqm, P 5,046,860 00
82 60 sqm, P 5,046,860 00
82 60 sqm, P 5 046,860 00
131.10 sqm, P 8 416,620 00
131.10 sqm P 8 416,620 00
131.10 sqm, P 8 416,620 00
132 sqm, P 8,474,400 00
132 sqm, P 8,474,400 00

Mandaluyong City
ARK
RESIDENTIAL UNITS
37.17 sqm, P 1,014,741.00
21.13 sqm, P 576,849 00
21 85 sqm, P 596,505 00
48.75 sqm, P 1,111,500.00
22.92 sqm, P 522,576 00
38 01 sqm, P 775,404 00
20 18 sqm, P 460,104 00
48 53 sqm, P 1,108,764.00
21 85 sqm, P 445,740.00
21 85 sqm, P 445,740 00
47 83 sqm, P 1,090 524.00
65 33 sqm, P 1,489,524 00
125 46 sqm, P 2 998,484 00
10 25 sqm, P 283,000 00

Pasig City
RENAISSANCE
RESIDENTIAL UNITS
279 sqm, P 7,810,000 00
156 sqm, P 4,212,000.00
182 sqm, P 5,446.200 00
190 sqm, P 5,130,000 00
190 sqm, P 5,130 000 00
118 sqm, P 3,186,000 00
188 sqm, P 5,076.000 00
279 sqm, P 8,366,700 00

San Juan City
ATLANTA
OFFICE UNITS
74.39 sqm. P 2,492.065 00
138 08 sqm, P 5,136,576 00
157 19 sqm, P 6,287,600 00
112 29 sqm, P 4,278,249 00
158 79 sqm, P 6,034,020 00
157.08 sqm, P 5,969,040 00
167 17 sqm P 6 686,800 00
157 44 sqm, P 6,612,480 00
229 85 sqm, P 10,600,695 00
229 61 sqm, P 10,565,198 00

TOWNHOUSES

Quezon City
ISABELLA PLACE
146 sqm, P 2,702,915 00
87 sqm, P 2 002,482 00
85 sqm, P 1.868,265 00
85 sqm P 1 868 265 00
85 sqm, P 1.868,265 00

Quezon City
GRANWOOD
102 sqm,P2,000,000 00
74 sqm, P 3,600,000.00

Quezon City
LA BREA
150 sqm, P1 914,000 00
180 sqm, P2,428 800.00
184 sqm, P 2,644,800.00
209 sqm, P2,730,700 00

SUBDIVISIONS

Carmona, Cavite
MANILA SOUTHWOOD
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
612 sqm, P 3,060 000 00
563 sqm, P 2,815,000 00
486 sqm, P 2.430,000 00
486 sqm, P 2,430,000 00
505 sqm, P 2,525 000 00
470 sqm, P 2,350 000 00
548 sqm, P 2,740,000 00
609 sqm, P 3,045,000 00
534 sqm, P 2,070,000 00
1000 sqm, P 5,000,000 00

Sta. Rosa, Laguna
STA.ROSA VILLAGE
HOUSE & LOT
115 sqm, P 821,000 00
125 sqm, P 840,000 00
136 sqm, P 873,000 00
136 sqm, P 873,000 00
137 sqm, P 966,000 00
137 sqm, 966,000 00
138 sqm, 968,000.00
164 sqm, P 1,032,000 00
178 sqm, P 835,000 00
245 sqm, P 968,000 00

Antipolo, Rizal
PARK RIDGE
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
437 sqm P 1.092 500 00
605 sqm, P 881,400.00
619 sqm, P 1,547.500 00
640 sqm, P 832,000 00
678 sqm, P1,028,500 00

Antipolo City
HILLS OF MAIA ALTA
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
153 sqm, P 627 300 00
153 sqm, P 627,300 00
153 sqm, P 627.300 00
160 sqm, P 768,000 00
164 sqm, P 754 400 00
168 sqm, P 672,000 00
173 sqm, P 761,200 00
177 sqm P 778,800 00
195 sqm, P 858.000 00
201 sqm, P 804,000 00
300 sqm, P 1,230,000 00
306 sqm, P 1,103,400 00
326 sqm, P 1,238,800 00
357 sqm, P 1,358,000 00

Bay, Laguna
ASIA VILLE
RESORT LOTS
175 sqm, P 350 000 00
175 sqm, P 350,000 00
175 sqm, P 350,000 00
175 sqm, P 350,000 00
175 sqm, P350,000.00
183 sqm, P 350,000.00

San Pablo, Laguna
RICHWOOD
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
263 sqm, P 473,400 00
267 sqm, P 480 600 00
271 sqm, P 487,800 00
271 sqm, P 487,800 00

Biñan, Laguna
SAN JOSE VILLAGE
HOUSE & LOTS
128 sqm, P 820,000 00
128 sqm, P 820.000 00
138 sqm, P 840,000.00
140 sqm, P 970,000 00
197 sqm, P 1,080,000 00

Calamba, Laguna
PALACIO REAL
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
150 sqm, P 405,000 00
163 sqm, P 420.900 00
190 sqm, P 513.000 00
192 sqm, P 441,600 00
200 sqm, P 520,000 00
215 sqm, P 451,500 00
222 sqm, P 599,400 00
277 sqm, P 747,900 00
279 sqm P 753,300 00
283 sqm, P 735,800 00
287 sqm, P 803,600 00
350 sqm, P 945.000 00
400 sqm P 960 000 00
528 sqm, P 1,425.600 00

Antipolo City
FOLIAGE HILLS
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
177 sqm, P 778,800 00
178 sqm, P 783,200 00
180 sqm, P 756,000 00
182 sqm, P 800,800 00
184 sqm, P 809 600 00
185 sqm, P 814,000 00
202 sqm, P 888 800 00
216 sqm, P 864,000 00
240 sqm, P 1,056,000 00
240 sqm, P 1,056,000 00
240 sqm, P 1,056,000 00
261 sqm, P 1,148,400 00

Bucaue, Bulacan
AYUKIT
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
50 sqm, P 143,710 95
50 sqm, P 143,710 95
50 sqm, P 143,710 95
50 sqm, P 143,710 95
60 sqm, P 172,453 00
100 sqm, P 287,421 90
126 sqm, P 419,635 97
131 sqm, P 376,522 68
146 sqm, P 419,636 00
148 sqm, P 425,384 41
160 sqm, P 459,875 00
179 sqm, P 514,485 19
205 sqm, P 589,215.00
206 sqm, P 592,089 11

Antipolo City
COTTONWOOD HEIGHT
RESIDENTIAL LOTS
212 sqm, P 975,200 00
216 sqm, P 950,400 00
217 sqm, P 868,000 00
230 sqm, P 1,012,000 00
242 sqm P 1,084,800 00
254 sqm P 1,016,000 00
303 sqm, P 1,151,400 00
304 sqm, P 1 276,800 00
325 sqm P 1,300,000 00
325 sqm P 1,300,000 00
359 sqm, P 1,364,200 00
385 sqm, P 1,540,000 00
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DBP sets up e-market for SMEs

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-controlled Development Bank of the Philippines this month will launch a new marketplace for receivables of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to banks and insurance companies—the first of its kind in the country.

DBP president Simon Paterno said the facility, which intends to speed up lending to SMEs, shall create an electronic marketplace for SMEs' receivables from large companies.

In an interview, Paterno noted that banks and financial institutions were in the business of buying receivables, also known as factoring. For instance, an SME which supplies goods to San Miguel Corp. can sell its 90-day receivables from the food and beverage giant. However, the processing would usually take a month to do so, as the buyer would still have to call up SMC to authenticate the receivables.

"What if we make an arrangement with SMC and other large-cap companies, so that the receivables can be made in a standardized form?" Paterno said. "We will accredit the big companies. So everyone will now compete for it."

When banks bid for the receivables of selected companies, Paterno said the SMEs would benefit by getting the most out of their assets.

"The DBP will put up an electronic authentication system for these receivables and then create a marketplace, a bidding system so that banks can compete to lower the cost for SMEs," Paterno said.

The DBP executive said the bank had tied up with computer giant IBM to develop the facility. He is confident that the facility would attract interest among banks and other financial institutions.

"The banks that have seen it love the concept," Paterno said. "We will roll this out in end-April. It shall be open to all banks and insurance companies. It will create a competitive environment for SME receivables."

However, Paterno said the facility would accommodate only the receivables from large, reputable companies.

PLDT Q1 net clears ₱4.5B level

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. is seen to double its net income during the first quarter from P2.5 billion a year ago, according to a ranking official.

Based on preliminary numbers, the country's dominant carrier has surpassed the P4.5-billion mark as of end-March, buoyed by profits of its cash-rich subsidiary Smart Communications Inc.

A PLDT source said that the first quarter performance was on track of the company target of about P18 billion in net profit this year.

PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan late last month said that the dominant carrier could exceed the P18-billion profit target this year if plans of Smart to buy debts and equity of PLDT in Pilipino Telephone Corp. pushes through before the end of the first semester.

"First quarter numbers are being finalized," said a ranking PLDT official. "At this point, net income is breaking the P4.5 billion level."

This is consistent with the P18 billion net income forecast for the year," the official added.

In 2003, the dominant carrier posted a net income of P11.2 billion—the highest in its 75-year history.

PLDT's earnings came mainly from Smart's P16.1 billion net income last year.

Smart had told Piltel creditors that it could absorb the latter's P20.5-billion debt.

In exchange, Smart would acquire PLDT's 45 percent stake in Piltel.

Pangilinan said acquiring Piltel would boost Smart's profits by as much as P2 billion each year.

Most of Smart's additional income would come from about P15 billion in tax savings, arising from P50 billion in tax shield from Piltel's accumulated losses and provisions.

According to the PLDT chair, feedback from Piltel's creditors on Smart's proposal to absorb the debts were positive.

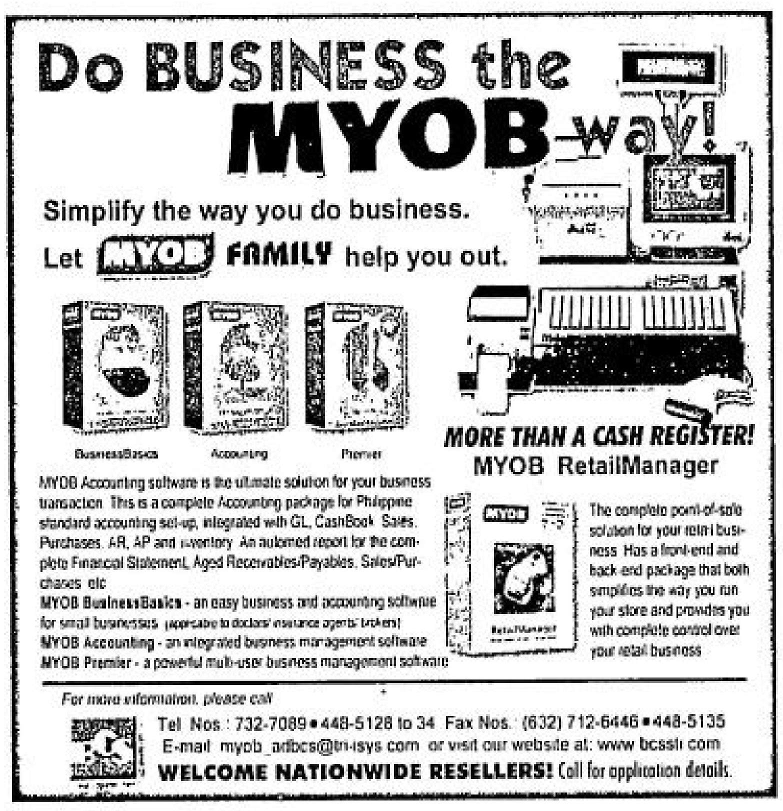
Smart gave Piltel creditors until April 19 to consider cash settlement at a discount, conversion to Smart's medium term dollar loans at a discount, conversion to a 10-year debt of Smart, or a swap with sovereign dollar bonds held by Smart.

Marubeni, one of Piltel's biggest creditors, was consulted even before Smart finalized its offer.

Pangilinan said that Piltel was also on track with its target of hitting P400 million in net earnings this year from a net loss of P3.35 billion in 2003.

Piltel had lost P61 billion since 1997.

PLDT said that the sustained earnings and religious payment of debt would allow it to start paying dividends to common shareholders by 2005.



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Carol Ford is a U.S. registered nurse who specializes in conducting review classes for nurses taking the CGFNS/NCLEX exams. She also pioneered the development of oral English materials in pronunciation and accent modification. She has provided English training for FORTUNE 500 executives, physicians, nurses, college students and university faculty in different parts of the world.

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Creeping prices

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

INDICATIONS point to prices going up this year significantly faster than the 3.1 percent average inflation rate that we posted in both 2002 and 2003. By our own historical standards, the last two years have been marked by relatively stable prices. As the country's chief economic planner back in the mid-1990s, I could only dream of a 3 percent inflation rate then, and even bringing it down to 6-7 percent was already ambitious at that time. It seems many of us have taken this relative price stability of recent years for granted—something that has not happened by chance, but mostly via deliberate moves by the government over the years.

Why inflation had slowed

The historically low inflation rates of recent years reflect the combined effects of structural economic reforms undertaken in the 1990s, sound monetary management by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) in recent years, and sheer good luck.

The economic reforms referred to included the reduction in trade barriers that made imports cheaper and more accessible. Since the bulk of our imports (i.e. more than 80 percent) are production inputs like capital equipment, fuels, raw materials and intermediate inputs, cost of production and hence prices of our products have been lower than they would have been otherwise. Likewise, imported consumer products have been more widely available, and at lower prices. Also part of the conducive economic reforms has been the increase in competition due to the elimination of monopolies and cartels in key sectors like telecommunications, domestic air transport and shipping, among others. And the more competition there is, the lower prices will be.

Meanwhile, the BSP also kept a firm rein on money supply, especially given the sluggish demand for credit in the past few years, and its adoption of an inflation-targeted monetary policy. With more controlled money supply growth, increases in the general price level have also been moderated.

There is of course the element of good luck coming from relatively stable weather conditions, which have been conducive to better agricultural production. Having been largely spared from devastating typhoons and other natural disasters in the past two years, the farm sector has done better, and this has been reflected in more stable prices for farm products.

Six reasons to go up

Alas, the whole inflation landscape has changed for 2004. There are at least six reasons why the government's projection of a 4-5 percent inflation rate is justified, and may even be breached.

First, the peso has gone to record lows, with the exchange rate having already exceeded the upper limit of the 54-56 to $1 exchange rate average projected by the government for the entire year. This means higher peso cost of imports, both of inputs and consumer goods alike.

On top of this, the government has decided to make imports even more expensive by moving backwards on the same tariff reforms undertaken in the 90s that had helped stabilize prices in recent years. Malacañang had succumbed to resurgent protectionist pressures last year and brought import tariffs back up to their 1998 levels. Given the rapid depreciation of the peso relative to the currencies of our neighbors within the last few months alone, these tariff reversions have been rendered unnecessary, as the peso depreciation has achieved the same effect as an increase in tariffs across the board. We have thus ended up with a double whammy against consumers.

Third, Opec hasn't helped either with its move to raise oil prices through production cuts leading to the record prices at the pump we are now seeing both here and abroad. With higher energy prices, practically everything else produced in the economy becomes more costly as well, as all commodities need to be transported, and all production activities use up energy in some way. Indeed, transport fares have already gone up in direct response to both the exchange rate and oil price pressures.

Fourth, being an election year further adds to the inflationary pressure, with massive election spending fueling price increases even more. With so much money moving around chasing largely the same amount of goods, the natural result would be for prices to move upwards—and the government isn't helping any by unleashing billions of pesos for various projects clearly timed to woo the voters.

Fifth, with the heavy debt burden now saddling the government, interest rates are bound to rise significantly from where they were last year, as they in fact already have. This is a further addition to the cost of doing business that will find its way into the final prices of the goods and services produced and sold in the economy.

And sixth, with all of the above happening, a new round of wage hike demands cannot be too far behind. This, too, will lead to even more pressures for a cost-price spiral that could get out of hand.

All told, inflation rate will approach 5 percent this year, and possibly even go beyond if the combination of internal and external pressures described above feed on one another. The newly-elected president must declare war not just against poverty and corruption; he/she will need to declare war against inflation as well.

(Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu)

G&W clubshares

BEST BUYS

Alabang Country Club A	1,080,000
Alabang Country Club B	1,200,000
Baguio Country Club	660,000
Canlubang Golf	430,000
Manila Southwoods A	420,000
Sherwood A	60,000

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OTHER SHARES AVAILABLE

CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alta Vista	-	200,000
Calatagan Golf	70,000	-
Canyonwoods	140,000	-
Camp John Hay	240,000	190,000
Capitol Hills	160,000	130,000
Club Filipino	-	120,000
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	280,000*	-
Eastridge A/B*	-	70,000/90,000*
Manila Golf Ind/Corp.*	-	9,500,000
Manila Polo	2,400,000	2,250,000
Makati Sports Club	200,000	Pls. Call
Metropolitan Club B	-	100,000
Mimosa C2/C3*	220,000	280,000*
Mimosa Golf Ind.	180,000	120,000
Punta Fuego	-	450,000
Riviera Golf A/B*	120,000/160,000*	110,000*
Rockwell Leisure Club	290,000	-
Royale Tagaytay CC	Pls. Call	-
Spa & Lodge	700,000	-
Sta. Elena A	-	1,100,000
Tagaytay Country Club	-	300,000
Tagaytay Highlands Golf	810,000	-
Tagaytay Midlands	660,000	-
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Valley Golf & CC	280,000	-
Valle Verde Ind	-	-
Wack Wack Golf	6,700,000	6,400,000

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Manila Polo Club	2.3M
Manila Yacht Club	250K
Makati Sports Club	180K
Orchard Golf Club	150K
Riviera Golf Club "B"	120K
Sta Elena Golf Club A	1.1M
Sta Elena Golf Club B	1.2M
SPA & Lodge	550K
Tagaytay Highlands	780K

We have available sellers as follows:

Alabang Country Club	1.1M
Baguio Country Club	650K
CAmp John Hay	220K
Celebrity Sports Club	170K
Eagle Ridge Golf Club A	230K
Eagle Ridge Golf CLub B	290K
Fontana C	170K
Fontana D	50K
Manila Southwoods A	350K
Manila Southwoods B	520K

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Boeing seen . . .

From page B1

can accommodate even the largest commercial and military aircraft in the world.

The airport, named after former President Macapagal, also has an existing passenger terminal that can serve 500 passengers per hour or 1.5 million passengers yearly.

The International Civil Aviation Organization said Clark airport met international standards.

Yap said that FedEx's decision to retain its Asia Pacific hub in the Philippines would not only give the government millions of pesos in revenue yearly from the lease arrangement and taxes but would also create employment and opportunities for the economy.

Subic Bay became FedEx's Asia Pacific hub in September 1995. The facility connects with 19 destinations worldwide. It allows the company do overnight deliveries to the US West Coast from Penang, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and East Timor.

Atlanta-based UPS invested $300 million in 2002 to put up its Asian hub in Clark. UPS delivers packages from Clark to Malaysia, Thailand, China, Singapore, India, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and Taipei.

But FedEx and UPS' local operations have been faced with a lot of controversies as local airlines accused the US carrier of operating illegally in the Philippines. FedEx as well as United Parcel Services allegedly operate on the basis of the so-called 7th freedom right that the current air agreement with the US does not provide.

But Yap said that Executive Order 253 issued by Malacanang in late 2003 gave freight carriers a solid legal ground for their local operations. The EO liberalizing the cargo operations of Clark and Subic is strongly opposed by employees of the country's flag carrier.

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 2, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17	16.75	17	78,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	44.5	45	44.5	45	749,600
Citystate Savings Bank	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	2,800
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38	38.5	38	38.5	62,800
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	110,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	23.75	24	23.5	23.5	572,000
Philippine National Bank	23.25	23.25	23.25	23.25	5,300
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	200
Union Bank of the Phil.	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5	400
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	2060	2060	2060	2060	60
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	131	131	131	131	10
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1485	1500	1485	1500	1,270
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	20	20.5	20	20.25	29,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.64	190,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	830	850	830	840	42,810
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.039	0.04	0.039	0.04	1,000,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.76	1.76	1.72	1.72	6,902,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	995	1000	985	990	184,070
Philweb Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	129,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	13,100
Manila Electric Co. B	24.5	25.5	24.5	25	1,426,700
Petron Corp.	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.9	6,922,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	110,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	200,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	35,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.95	2.95	2.75	2.75	460,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	60,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	17	17.5	17	17.5	1,972,800
RFM Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	110,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	57	56.5	57	149,400
San Miguel Corp. B	71	71	71	71	244,500
Universal Robina Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	40,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	250,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6.1	6.1	6	6.1	19,231,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	14,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	1,600,000
A. Soriano Corporation	1	1	1	1	30,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	4,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.48	1.5	1.48	1.5	55,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.5	2,040,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.135	0.14	650,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	100,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	20.75	21.25	20.75	21.25	143,700
Ionics Inc.	1.16	1.28	1.16	1.28	12,000
J.G. Summit Holdings, Inc	1.78	1.78	1.78	1.78	5,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	2,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	5,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	3,640,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	3,430,000
Prime Orion Phils., Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	70,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	14	14.5	14	14.5	4,800
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	75,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	5,000
Pryce Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	500,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	360,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	450,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	30,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	19.75	20.5	19.75	20.5	240,400
ATS Corp. - Preferred	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,400
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	1,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6	6	6	6	10,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.3	1,534,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.125	0.15	0.125	0.15	30,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.12	0.125	0.12	0.125	570,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	90,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.02	1.08	1.02	1.06	16,480,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.17	0.18	0.14	0.18	61,160,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	20,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.0975	0.1	0.0975	0.1	32,400,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	250,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.9	6	5.9	6	2,793,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	25,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.22	7,530,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	1,280,000
Omico Corp.	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	9,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	200,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.37	920,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	1,585,940	52,969,160.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	193,100,380	481,287,035.00
PRO	115,327,000	54,510,500.00
Mining	43,930,000	2,444,700.00
GRAND TOTALS :	353,943,320	591,211,395.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	422.43	UP 3.54
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,267.76	UP 24.97
PRO	520.89	UP 12.00
Mining	1,483.28	UP 2.97
OIL	1.12	UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	940.42	UP 7.75
Composite	1,450.91	UP 17.80

NO. OF ADVANCES: 42, NO. OF DECLINES: 17, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 27, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 86, NO. OF TRADES: 1,565

Sluggish trading . . .

From page B1

the government's budget deficit.

A top executive of a European brokerage firm said investors might also look at the latest results from election-related surveys as a barometer this week to either sell or buy more shares in the market.

"If it shows that Macapagal-Arroyo is expanding her lead then the market may close on a firmer note," the brokerage official said.

Opposition standard-bearer and movie actor Fernando Poe and incumbent Macapagal-Arroyo seem to be on a tight race statistically for the country's top government post, according to the latest pre-election poll published last week. The latest survey by the Social Weather Station showed Poe was supported by 34.9 percent of the respondents while Macapagal got 32.9 percent in the survey conducted from March 11 to 19.

The SWS survey of 2,000 people nationwide has a margin of error of 2.2 percentage points.

The survey showed Poe ahead of Ms Macapagal in the Luzon region, 35 percent to 25 percent, and in Mindanao, 45 percent to 36 percent. But the President leads in the Visayas, 51 percent to Poe's 22 percent, the same survey says.

In a previous SWS survey, conducted on Feb. 17-25, 31.8 percent of respondents chose Macapagal while 30.5 percent picked Poe. The two leading candidates have been in a neck-and-neck race for the presidency since late February according to various surveys.

The recovery of the major markets abroad also brought some inspirations to local investors, said Jovis Vistan of AB Capital Securities.

He said the New York Stock Exchange or Wall Street managed to rebound from earlier losses despite warnings from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

"OPEC, which pumps about a third of the world's oil, signaled that it would go ahead with a scheduled 4 percent production cut. The move could drive crude oil prices above $40 a barrel, which would mean higher fuel costs.

In the meantime, Asian stocks, led by Japan's, remained strong. Japanese stocks rose after the central bank's Tankan survey showed sentiment among large manufacturers was the highest since 1997 and service companies became optimistic for the first time in seven years," he wrote in a weekly report.

Vistan said investors might hold off further buying this week with recent warnings of renewed terrorism that would make investors more skeptical about holding shares during the holidays.

"Subsequent terror attacks and domestic politics has tempered expectations. Politics has not only dampened investors' sentiments, but it is also making them less optimistic about the short-term outlook. Investors are still a little afraid to step out ahead of the May 10 elections," Vistan said.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PSE-listed firms asked to form audit committees

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TO FURTHER enforce good corporate governance, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) will ask all companies listed on the big board of the Philippine Stock Exchange to have an audit committee.

SEC said the committee should be composed of at least two independent directors, one of whom would be its chair. The audit committee will be tasked to choose the external auditor of the company.

SEC said those who fail to comply with this rule will be fined P10,000 and P500 per day of delay of compliance. The circular will take effect 15 days from the publication in a newspaper.

Companies listed on the first board of the exchange are those with net tangible assets of P500 million and have a five-year operating history. These companies should also have market capitalization of P500 million and a track record of profitable operations for three full fiscal years.

Independent directors are normally placed in the board to uphold the interests of small shareholders. An independent director is one who is "free from any business or any other relationship which could materially interfere with the exercise of independent judgement."

Good governance codes state that the audit committee acts as the board's oversight body over both non-financial and financial matters.

It is tasked to review the firm's financial statements before submission to the board. The committee may focus on any change in accounting policies and practices, major adjustments resulting from audit, compliance with accounting standards, and compliance with tax, legal and stock exchange requirements.

ABS-CBN offers more services for Pinoys abroad

ABS-CBN Global Ltd. has come to answer the needs of Filipino workers abroad.

Aside from operating The Filipino Channel (TFC), the wholly-owned subsidiary of media giant ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. has come up with a host of products and services that would cater to thousands of homesick overseas Filipino workers.

ABS-CBN Global now has a one-stop shop for Filipinos abroad, offering such services as remittance, retail, cargo, special events, TV program development and syndication and advertising sales and production.

"These innovations are part of our mission to be in the service of the Filipino worldwide," said Jeffrey Remigio, ABS-CBN Global's director and head of Manila operations. "Everywhere they go, we are there for them."

Seeing how overseas Pinoys long to maintain connection to the homeland through news and TV programs, TFC became the flagship product of ABS-CBN Global, offering the first and only 24-hour, cable and satellite service.

TFC Direct!

Now it is seen by almost a million Filipinos in North America, Australia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Cambodia, New Caledonia, American Samoa, the Gulf States and, recently, Europe.

Last April 3, ABS-CBN mounted a show at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, California, to celebrate TFC's 10th anniversary. The show featured some of the network's hottest stars lead by Martin Nievera. The show yesterday was broadcast in ASAP Mania.

For those at ABS-CBN Global, sensitivity to the concerns of OFWs has become a rallying point.

The group then introduced another service by bundling TFC with three other Philippine channels: 24-hour ABS-CBN News Channel, Cinema One movie channel, and Pinoy Central TV that airs regional, travel and sports programs.

The bundle, known as TFCDirect!, is a direct-to-home satellite service delivering all six channels in digital broadcast quality.

For overseas calls, ABS-CBN Telecom provides OFWs with several options to call from the US and Canada to anywhere in the world through products like pre-paid cards (Tawag Na! disposable phone card; Sarimanok One rechargeable phone card; and Sarimanok Global worldwide access travel card); post-paid (long distance direct) or collect (1237-00 Bayan Kollect sa America).

Cargo forwarding service

Tapping into the lucrative remittance business, the network came up with ABS-CBN Global Money. Pinoys working in the Middle East can now send money to parties in the country using this facility.

For Filipinos in North America, there are publications, music, video, movies and other exclusive products awaiting them at Starry Starry Store, the network's shopping center overseas.

There is also a cargo forwarding service for TFCDirect! subscribers in North America, via StarKargo. StarKargo, managed by ABS-CBN International and RCPI, assures customers of prompt delivery and the convenience of sending now, paying later because the billing is posted in the universal TFCDirect! statement.

RP public sector deficit up 11 %

But figures are well within the programmed range, says DoF

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S consolidated public sector fiscal position took a turn for the worse in 2003, with deficit increasing by 11 percent from year-ago level, according to data from the Department of Finance.

The DOF said the public sector deficit increased to P244.59 billion last year, from P218.718 billion in 2002.

The 2003 deficit figure stood represented 5.6 percent of the gross domestic product for the year, higher than the 5.4 percent recorded in 2002. It was, however, better than the programmed 6.6 percent.

The 2003 consolidated public sector fiscal deficit, although higher than the previous year's level, was within the target of P284.813 billion.

"The better performance against the program was due to the lower national government deficit," the DOF said in a statement.

The consolidated public sector deficit, which gives a better picture of the budget shortfall scenario than the national government's budget-gap figure, is the total deficit incurred by the national government, local government units, government-owned and -controlled corporations, and government financial institutions.

The 2003 figure was partly attributed to higher deficits incurred by several GOCCs.

Data showed that the deficit incurred by monitored GOCCs reached P65.315 billion in 2003, or higher than the P46.358 billion the previous year.

The higher consolidated public sector deficit in 2003 came around despite the improvement in the national government's deficit.

In 2003, the national government's deficit decreased to only P199.9 billion from P210.74 billion in 2002.

The 2003 figure was also better than the target of P202 billion.

The national government said its better-than-expected budget deficit last year was attributed to the observance of strict fiscal discipline to achieve its goal of having a balanced budget by 2009.

For this year, the national government has set its deficit ceiling at P197.8 billion from last year's actual deficit of P199.9 billion.

According to the national government deficit schedule, it is targeting to achieve a budget gap of not more than P58.9 billion for the first quarter, P79.6 billion by the end of the second quarter, P143.3 billion by the end of the third quarter, and P197.8 billion by the end of the year.

For the first two months of the year, the national government's deficit stood at P34.57-billion, or well on track to meet the P58.9-billion target for the first quarter.

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NOTICE OF CLOSURE

Notice is hereby given that the Representative Office of **JOHNSON CONTROLS HONG KONG, LTD.** in the Philippines has closed and ceased operations effective **31 December 2002.**

(PDI - March 22, 29 & April 5, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
City of San Fernando

INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION

Date : April 5, 2004
Contract No: SP-010-IN-04

1. The Government of the Philippines has received a Loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, hereinafter referred to as the IBRD, in various currencies toward the cost of the Local Government Finance and Development (LOGOFIND) Project, and intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of the loan to payments under the contract for which this Invitation for Pre-qualification is issued. Disbursement of the IBRD Loans and IDA Credits will be subject, in all respects, to the terms and conditions of the Loan Agreement, including the disbursement procedures and the 'Guidelines for Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits'.
2. The City Government of San Fernando, La Union, hereinafter referred to as "the Owner", intends to pre-qualify eligible firms for a project comprising the following services and works:
   - i the preparation of a detailed design to upgrade and expand the existing municipal solid waste disposal facility at Barangay Mameltac, approximately 4.5 km north-east of the centre of the City of San Fernando, La Union, in accordance with modern international standards,
   - ii the construction of a new cell of the sanitary landfill, together with all associated infrastructure, and the re-development of the existing cell currently being used for the disposal of municipal solid waste,
   - iii. the procurement of any fixed and mobile plant and equipment required to upgrade the standard of operations at the disposal facility, and
   - iv. the operation and maintenance of the waste disposal facility up to 31st December 2007, including the provision of training to the Local Government Unit staff in all aspects of site operation and maintenance
3. A pre-qualification video conference with the Owner, representatives of LOGOFIND and the World Bank, will be held at the Conference Room, City Hall, City of San Fernando at 07 30 a.m. on Thursday April 29, 2004. All prospective Applicants are invited to attend in order to be briefed on the project and the pre-qualification process.
4. It is expected that Invitations to Bid will be made in July, 2004
5. Pre-qualification is open to firms and voluntarily formed joint ventures from eligible source countries, in accordance with the *Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits* (January 1995 Edition, revised in January and August 1996, September 1997 and November 1999. The World Bank. ISBN 0-8213-3218-X)
6. Eligible applicants may obtain the pre-qualification documents from April 6, 2004 up to May 21, 2004 from the City Engineer's Office, at the address noted below, upon the submission of a written application stating the contract number accompanied by the payment of a non-refundable fee of Philippine Peso 3,000 or United States Dollars 50
7. The City will promptly dispatch the documents by registered airmail, but under no circumstances will it be held responsible for late delivery or loss of the documents so mailed
8. Submissions of Applications for Pre-qualification must be received in sealed envelopes, either delivered by hand or by registered mail to the BAC Chairman at the address noted below not later than the time and date set out in the PITA and be clearly marked "Application to Pre-qualify for Contract No. SP-010-IN-04, Design, Build and Operation of a Sanitary Landfill at Barangay Mameltac, City of San Fernando, La Union."
9. The City of San Fernando reserves the right to accept or reject late applications
10. Applicants will be advised, in due course, of the results of their applications. Only firms and joint ventures pre-qualified under this procedure will be invited to bid

(Sgd.) Annjanette E. Dimaculangan
BAC Chairman
San Fernando City, La Union,
The Philippines

Telephone (+63) 72 242 5601 to 5605
Facsimile (+63) 72 888 3931
Email: csfu@info.com.ph
Website: www.csfu/sanfernandocity@info.com

(PDI – April 5, 2004)

DepED
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
DIVISION OF ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY
Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay

Third Elementary Education Project
Bids and Awards Committee

Third Elementary Education Project

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

To All Qualified Bidders:

April 5, 2004

1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) towards the cost of financing the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments for civil works component of the project. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.
2. The Division Bids and Awards Committee (DBAC) invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following projects and locations to wit:

PACKAGE NO	PROJECT LOCATION	SCHOOL	TYPE OF WORK		PCAB License Particular	BID OPENING
			NC	RR		
ZSNCB-2003-014-082 (Re-bid)	MABUHAY Zamboanga Sibugay	Pamansaan ES Tandu Comot ES	2	0	Small "B" for Building	May 5, 2004; 9:00 a.m.
ZSNCB-2003-018-086 (Re-bid)	PAYAO Zamboanga Sibugay	Binangonan ES Culasian ES La Fortuna ES Balian ES	1	6	Small "B" for Building	May 5, 2004; 9:00 a.m.
ZSNCB-2003-022-090 (Re-bid)	TALUSAN Zamboanga Sibugay	Cawilan ES Mahayahay ES Tuburan ES	1	6	Small "B" for Building	May 5, 2004, 9:00 a.m.
ZSNCB-2003-023-093	BUUG and MALANGAS Zamboanga Sibugay	Ping ES Compostela ES La Dicha ES	0	8	Small "B" for Building	May 6, 2004, 9:00 am
ZSNCB-2003-024-094	DIPLAHAN Zamboanga Sibugay	Sampoli B ES Paradise ES Goling ES	0	7	Small "B" for Building	May 6, 2004; 9:00 am
ZSNCB-2003-024-095	KABASALAN Zamboanga Sibugay	Tigbangagan ES Pahnia ES Buayan ES	0	9	Small "B" for Building	May 6, 2004; 9:00 am
ZSNCB-2003-024-096	NAGA, SIAY and ALICIA Zamboanga Sibugay	Capt. P. Chanco MES Coloran ES Talaptap ES Dawa-dawa ES	0	10	Small "B" for Building	May 6, 2004; 2:00 pm
ZSNCB-2003-024-097	MABUHAY, OLUTANGA and PAYAO Zamboanga Sibugay	Taguisian ES Kalines ES Kahayagan ES Bulawan ES	0	11	Small "B" for Building	May 6, 2004, 2:00 pm
ZSNCB-2003-024-098	IPIL, TUNGAWAN and TITAY Zamboanga Sibugay	Moreno Tadeo MES Sisay ES Loboc ES Kitabog ES	0	10	Small "B" for Building	May 6, 2004, 2:00 pm

3. Bidding documents may be purchased at DepEd Division Office of *Zamboanga Sibugay* with address at Tirso Babiera, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay for a nonrefundable fee of P2,500.00 for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information at the same address.
4. Bids shall be valid for a period of ninety (90) days after Bid opening and must be accompanied by a security in the amount of 2.5% of total bid price, and shall be delivered to Division's Bids and Awards Committee, Department of Education – Division Office of Zamboanga Sibugay, Barangay Tirso Babiera, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay on or before *the date stipulated in the above table corresponding to its package numbers* in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.
5. For clarification, a Pre-bid Conference will be conducted on April 22, 2004 at 9:00 AM at the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, Division of Zamboanga Sigubay, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay

(Sgd.) ROGELIO A. GOMEZ
Chairperson
Division Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - April 5, 2004)

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Zamboanga City
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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA)** in Region IX, with official address at Gov. Ramos Ave., San Roque, Zamboanga City, invites all interested shipping companies/ship owners/operators who are registered/licensed by MARINA to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hiring of vessels for voyage charter in the dispersal of NFA stocks from Port of Zamboanga to the provinces of Region IX and the ARMM province of Basilan, as follows:

Destination		Quantity (in Bags of 50 kg)	Approved Freight Rate per Bag of 50 kg (in Pesos)	Approved Budget (In Pesos)	Vessel Capacity (in Bags of 50 kg)
Province	Port				
Zambo, Sur	Pagadian	190,000	14.00	2,660,000.00	40,000 to 50,000
Sibugay	Liloy	65,000	15.00	825,000.00	15,000 to 20,000
Zambo, Norte	Dapitan/ Liloy	190,000	15.00	2,850,000.00	15,000 to 30,000
Basilan	Isabela	100,000	10.00	1,000,000.00	5,000 to 10,000
	TOTAL	535,000		7,335,000.00	

Shipping companies/ship owners/operators who wish to participate in the bidding shall accredit with NFA IX - Committee on Vessel Chartering (NFA IX - CVC), Gov. Ramos Ave., San Roque, Zamboanga City on the dates/time stated in the schedule below. Those who were already accredited and/or issued with the Certificates of Accreditation for Voyage Charter by NFA IX - CVC, may no longer apply for accreditation. However, those whose Certificate of Accreditation for Voyage Charter have already expired shall apply for renewal.

Schedule of bidding activities:

Particulars	Date/Time
• Accreditation of shipping companies/ ship owners/operators	April 6 to 20, 2004/ 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
• Issuance of application forms for eligibility and list of eligibility requirements	April 16 to 21, 2004/ 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
• Submission of eligibility requirements and Letter of Intent	April 23 & 26, 2004/ 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
• Issuance of bidding documents	May 4 to 6, 2004/ 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
• Pre-bidding conference	May 12, 2004 / 2:00 PM
• Submission and opening of bids	May 24, 2004 / 2:15 PM

Application forms for eligibility to bid and list of eligibility requirements will be issued only to accredited shipping companies/ship owners/operators by NFA IX - RBAC Secretariat, Gov. Ramos Ave., San Roque, Zamboanga City upon payment of non-refundable fee of Php 500.00 on the dates/time specified in the above schedule. Prospective bidders may secure bidding documents at the NFA IX - RBAC Secretariat, Gov. Ramos Ave., San Roque, Zamboanga City upon submission of Letter of Intent and payment of non-refundable amount of Php 1,500.00 on the dates/ time indicated in the above schedule.

The venue of Pre-Bid Conference, Submission and Opening of Bids will be at NFA Conference Room, Gov. Ramos Ave., San Roque, Zamboanga City.

All particulars relative to Bid Security, Performance Security and bidding procedures shall be governed by the provisions of the Implementing Rules and Regulations - Part A dated **July 11, 2003** of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act and as provided in the Instruction to Bidders.

NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY/INFORMALITY OF THE BIDS RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT ONLY SUCH BIDS WHICH ARE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) **ERNESTO M. MACASINAG**
Regional Director

(PDI - April 5 & 19, 2004)

NFA assures availability of low-priced, quality rice

THE National Food Authority assures the public of the continuous presence of low-priced but quality NFA rice in the market as the agency implements a new rice distribution scheme.

The distribution scheme aims to make NFA rice more accessible and affordable to consumers. The new strategy will tap the assistance of retailers' organizations nationwide in selling NFA rice. It also includes the conduct of mobile sales to retailers as well as the reactivation and accreditation of more NFA stationary stores.

NFA Administrator Arthur C. Yap authorized the agency's regional and provincial officials to conduct meetings with the officers of the local chapters of the Confederation of Grains Retailers Associations of the Philippines, Inc. (GRECON) to request their assistance in selling NFA rice with priority given to outlets inside the markets.

In a directive he issued, Yap also ordered the reactivation of the Bigasan ni Gloria sa Palengke (BGP) outlets. While the BGPs were originally NFA dedicated outlets, under the present distribution scheme, commercial rice can be sold side by side with NFA rice.

Field officials have also been authorized to conduct on-the-spot licensing to make more convenient the accreditation and operation of rice outlets.

Mobile sales will be conducted for retailers in major and minor markets nationwide free of charge. Under a similar arrangement, rice will also be delivered to BGP outlets and accredited individual retailers with outlets inside markets as well as to Tindahan ni Gloria sa Barangays (TGBs) operated by local government officials.

Partnership between the NFA and the Tindahan ni Gloria and the rolling stores will also be reactivated. Other interested parties are also encouraged to forge agreements with the food agency to be able to operate rice outlets.

Yap also cited the revival of other strategies to sell regular-milled and fortified rice. These include the institutional sales to government and private offices and sales through private convenience stores, groceries and department stores.

NFA inspection teams shall be fielded to monitor both operational and non-operational outlets.

Yap said that local media organizations will be provided with the master list of NFA outlets to help provide NFA with feedback on the implementation of the new strategies.

For inquiries, comments and suggestions, the public may send text messages to Text NFA at 0917-6210927.

Bicol University
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bicol University thru its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) is inviting contractors for the bidding of the project: Repair & Improvement of Engineering Building II at BU Main Campus, Legazpi City with an approved budget (ABC) of P5,700,000.00.

The following schedule should be strictly observed:

1. Deadline for submission of letter of intent (c/o Legal Office)	- April 6, 2004
2. Deadline for submission of Eligibility Requirements (c/o Legal Office)	- April 12, 2004
3. Start of Issuance of Bid Documents	- April 19, 2004
4. Pre-bid Conference	- April 26, 2004, 9:00 AM BU Boardroom
5. Submission & Opening of Bid	- May 6, 2004, 9:00 AM BU Boardroom

The Bid Documents, Plans and Drawings will only be issued to eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P________ at the Cashier's Office, General Administration Building, BU Main Campus, Legazpi City.

For further information, please call the Bicol University Legal Office at tel. no. (052) 821-7958.

The Bicol University reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formality or technicality, and to award to the bidder with the lowest calculated and responsive bid.

(Sgd.) **MR. RENATO G. HINGCO**
Chairman, BAC

(PDI - March 29 & April 5, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
METRO COTABATO WATER DISTRICT
COTABATO CITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Metro Cotabato Water District invites interested suppliers for public bidding of supply & delivery:

A. 1 unit Utility Vehicle – Power Steering FB Deluxe with dual aircon, 2500cc, with stereo, with 4D56 Diesel Engine, 2.205 kgs. G.V.W., Body and Payload capacity of 1,140 kgs., 5 speed manual transmission with 185 SR 14-8 ply Radial Tires, 15 seater van, L-300.

B. 1 unit Utility Vehicle – PET 8 Footer High Side Pick-Up with Roof with 2500cc, 4D56 Diesel Engine, 2.205 kgs. G.V.W., Body and Payload capacity of 1,140 kgs., five (5) speed manual transmission with 185 SR 14-8 ply Radial Tires, with rain curtains and wide tail gate, L-300.

Interested parties may secure bid documents from Metro Cotabato Water District.

The schedule of the bidding activities is as follows:

PARTICULAR	DATE / TIME
Issuance of Bid Documents	April 13-16, 2004
Opening / Submission of Bids	April 21, 2004

The MCWD reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, waive any defect therein and make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the MCWD. The MCWD likewise assumes no obligation for whatever losses that may be incurred by the bidders in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that the award shall be made.

(Sgd.) **MANUEL D. MAGDAEL**
Chairperson
Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI–April 5 & 12, 2004)

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

Cabanatuan Branch, Cabanatuan City

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on 23 April 2004 at 10:30 a.m. at the DBP Cabanatuan Branch, Cabanatuan City for the following properties on CASH BASIS.

LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM SELLING PRICE
Sto. Tomas, San Jose City, Nueva Ecija	**I. Land** 26.000 sq. m. Industrial-Residential land covered by TCT No. 26107, San Jose Registry. **II. Building & Improvements** Erected on the above lot are. Cold Storage Warehouse – TFA of 2,460 sq.m. Office/Residential – TFA of 175 sq. m. Fence and Gates Garage / Sorting Area Loading Area – TFA of 500 sq m. **III. Machinery & Equipment:** 3 units ammonia screw compressor; (2 sets) evaporative, condenser, 1 set ammonia receiver, 2 sets ammonia separator, 1 set ammonia liquid filter, 1 set air separator, 1 set oil rap and cooling water system, 10 units air curtain complete with electric controlling system and cold storage rooms. 150 pcs. Oil Trays/Racks 1 unit Power Transformer Dry-Type Transformer 1 Lot Electrical Grounding System **(F.O. – DIGNO ALBAO, JR.)**	P 82,667,500.00

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers (044) 463-1160 & 463-1163
(044) 463-0243 & 600-0702

(Sgd.) **AVP RENATO G. BERNARDO**
Branch Head

(PDI – April 4 & 5, 2004)

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KALAW : **528-0213, 527-3342, 522-4406**
MEGAMALL : **635-0219, 635-0220**

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Date: April 2, 2004
Contract No. BCMD.2004-004

1. Contract No.: BCMD.2004-004 - Supply and Delivery of Steel Poles for CY 2004 for the Operation and Maintenance of TransCo
2. **The contract to be performed by the successful bidder shall consist of supplying and delivering the required Steel Poles to the designated Substations of National Transmission Corporation.**
3. **The Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid is P129,678,713.00 from the Internal Cash Generation of TransCo.**
4. **Application for Eligibility is open to manufacturers, suppliers/dealers, distributors who are in the steel poles business for at least five (5) years and have the legal, technical and financial requisites of the contract to be bid.**
5. **The following manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors shall be eligible to participate in the bidding for the supply of goods:**
   a. Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships;
   b. Partnerships duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the interest belongs to citizens of the Philippines;
   c. Corporations duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizens of the Philippines;
   d. **Manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors forming themselves into a joint venture, *i.e.*, a group of two (2) or more manufacturers, suppliers and/ or distributors that intend to be jointly and severally responsible or liable for a particular contract: *Provided, however*, That Filipino ownership or interest of the joint venture concerned shall be at least sixty percent (60%); or**
   e. **Cooperatives duly registered with CDA.**
6. **Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the supplier's offer to the contract under bidding subject to Post qualification before an award is made. Bid Prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.**
7. **Eligibility & Bid Documents will be available for issuance on** April 5, 2004 **at the** Bids and Contract Management Department, National Transmission Corporation, Ground Floor, Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City 1104, **Telefax No.: 921-2308 upon presentation of Letter of Intent and a payment of non-refundable fee of P10,000.00.**
8. **Deadline for submission of sealed, duly accomplished Application for Eligibility Forms, statements and Bid Proposals (Technical and Price) shall be on May 18, 2004, 1:30 p.m. at the Administration Conference Room, National Transmission Corporation, Ground Floor, Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila. Late bids shall not be accepted.**
9. **Pre-Bid Conference shall be held on** April 29, 2004 **at the above venue.**
10. **Manufacturers, suppliers/dealers, distributors not yet included in the TransCo's List of registered Suppliers/Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening, are requested to register with the registration office mentioned above by submitting the following basic requirements, duly notarized, which should be maintained current and updated at least once a year. A certificate of Registration will be issued to suppliers/contractors upon approval.**
    - **Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) business name registration or Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration certificate, as appropriate;**
    - **Mayor's permit and/or municipal license for the current year;**
    - **Taxpayer's Identification Number;**
    - **Notarized statement of the prospective bidder that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any government agency, office or corporation;**
    - **Audited financial statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing, among others, the prospective bidder's total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt;**

    For foreign bidders in Joint Venture, the required documents applicable to entities doing business in the Philippines shall be substituted by the appropriate equivalent documents issued by foreign bidder's country, which documents shall be duly acknowledged and/or authenticated by the Philippine Consulate thereat.

    Note: Prospective bidders are allowed to submit the above requirements together with their Eligibility Forms and Documents during the deadline for the submission of Eligibility requirements and Bid proposals (Technical and Price).
11. **TransCo reserves the right to reject any application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.**
12. **The Contract to be bid shall be governed by the Provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.**
13. **Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.**

(Sgd.) DOMINADOR S. GEONZON
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - April 5, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE
Bids and Awards Committee for
Information Technology (BAC-IT)
Quezon City

March 23, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for:

Name of Project	:	**MOBILE SUBSCRIPTION FOR REVENUE OFFICERS FOR THE TAX COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION DRIVE PROJECT (Mobile RO)**
Location of the Project	:	**Bureau of Internal Revenue**
Contract Duration	:	**May 3 to December 31, 2004**
Approved Budget	:	**P10,002,500.00**
Source of Funding	:	**e-Government Fund**

All interested parties may obtain the bidding documents from the BAC-IT Secretariat, c/o Room 605, 6/F, BIR-National Office Bldg., BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City starting March 29, 2004, upon payment of non-refundable fee of P2,000.00.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **April 1, 2004, Thursday at 1:30 p.m.**, at the **Executive Conference Room, 3/F BIR-National Office Building, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City**.

Deadline for the submission and opening of eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals shall be on **April 13, 2004, Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.**, to be held at the **Executive Conference Room, 3/F BIR-National Office Building, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City** to be followed by the opening of the bids.

All particulars relative to eligibility process, bidding, evaluation of bids, post-qualification and award of contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act and its implementing rules and regulations.

The BIR assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any excuse or loss that they may incur in the preparation of their bids. The BIR also reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any of the required formality therein and accept the bids most advantageous to the government.

For particulars, please inquire from the BAC-IT Secretariat, thru the Chief, SSTMD-IPQS at Room 302, 3/F, Revenue Computer Center (RCC) Bldg., BIR Compound, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone nos. 981-7085, 927-4101 (telefax), 981-7079 and 981-7080 or e-mail us at lilibeth.maranan@bir.gov.ph.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. LEONOR S. VILLALON-ROGERS**
Assistant Commissioner-HRDS
Chairman, BAC-IT

(PDI - March 29 & Apr. 5, 2004)

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Message of Thanks

Our thanks to all those
who offered masses, novenas and prayers;
sent flowers and messages of sympathy;
kept vigil and attended the funeral rites;
and who in countless ways condoled with, helped
and comforted us in our moment of grief.

Thank you.

From the family of the late
Manny T.Y. Ang
(Ang Tiao Yong)

So Dearly Loved...
So Fondly Remembered...
So Truly Missed...

In Memory of
a devoted husband, a loving father and grandfather,
a dedicated friend and an inspiring leader...

MARCELO S. BALATBAT

September 4, 1908 – April 5, 2000
on the
4th Anniversary
of his rebirth to Eternal Life

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
John 14:6

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Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out
the lamp because the dawn has come.
Rabindranath Tagore

Atty. Jose G. Aportadera

Former OIC-Mayor, Dingle, Iloilo

Died on March 31, 2004 at the age of 70.

His wife, **Teresita**; children **Leomil & Lourdes, Ma Josefa & Bernardo Jr., Maria Corazon & Aris**; granddaughter **Metmet** and sister **Aurora** request all those whose lives he has touched to remember him in prayers. May his memory always be cherished.

His body lies in state at 36 Commission Civil Street, Jaro, Iloilo City.

His remains will be brought to the Aportadera residence at Dingle, Iloilo on April 11, 2004.

Interment will be on April 12, 2004 at Forest Lake Cemetery, Mandurriao, Iloilo City after the 10:00 a.m. mass at St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Jaro, Iloilo City.

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Tel. Nos. 522-00-00; 526-01-00 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites interested suppliers who are (a) duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietors; or (b) 60% Filipino-owned Partnership/Corporations; or (c) two or more suppliers forming into joint ventures jointly and severally liable; or (d) cooperatives duly registered with the CDA; with largest single contract, similar to the items for bid, for the last 2 years, at least equal to 50% of the approved budget; and with Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) at least equal to the approved budget, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following items:

ITB No.	Item/Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2004-060	8,460 boxes continuous form, 11"x14-7/8" 3,000 boxes statement of account, 8-1/2"x9-1/2"	P 5,589,538.00 P 1,239,000.00	LBP Funds
2004-070	Various Office Supplies	P 3,824,008.32	LBP Funds
2004-075	1,050 units Personal Computers	P 43,010,625.00	LBP Funds
2004-084	One (1) lot supply, delivery, customization civil works and installation of five (5) units BILLS PAYMENT MACHINE (BPM) KIOSKS with Card Reader-Magnetic Reader, swipe-type (with front-end software Development plus five (5) licenses)	P 2,918,032.00	LBP Funds

Bidding of the above requirements is scheduled on May 5, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. and the Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Division of the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar St., Malate, Manila.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on April 20 and 22, 2004, at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to the Qualification/Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Only those bidders who comply with the Bank's requirements shall be eligible to participate in the bidding.

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any defect or informality and to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Bank.

COMMITTEE ON BIDS AND AWARDS

(PDI-April 5 & 12, 2004)

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UNDP

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLY OF GOODS FOR THE RELOCATION OF OFFICES OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES IN THE PHILIPPINES FROM NEDA SA MAKATI BUILDING TO THE 30TH, 31ST, & PART OF 29TH FLOORS *OF RCBC YUCHENGCO TOWER, AYALA AVENUE, MAKATI CITY*

In compliance with the Secretary General's UN Reform Programme, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) System in the Philippines, consisting of all UN agencies present in the country, has undertaken steps to harmonize common services among the UN Agencies in the Philippines. Among other areas, the relocation to a common UN premises where the agencies can achieve better security for all its staff is being jointly implemented on the basis of inter-agency cooperation.

The Development Support Services Center (DSSC) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Philippine Country Office, for and on behalf of all UN Agencies of the Philippines, would like to invite contractors suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following needs/requirements of the UN Agencies in the Philippines in connection with their proposed relocation

Contract Packages	Cost of Bid Document in PhP (Non-Refundable)
1. Main Contract Works (Interior Fit-out and Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) Services)	10,000.00
2. Workstations & Filing Cabinets	5,000.00
3. Seatings	1,000.00
4. Storage Cabinets And Compactus	1,000.00
5. Carpet	1,000.00
6. Loose Furniture	500.00
7. Telecommunication Structured Cabling	500.00
8. Security and Access Control System	500.00
9. Blinds	500.00

Interested bidders may submit bid proposals for any one or all of the above-mentioned contracts.

For interested parties, Bid Documents (Eligibility Requirements, Instructions to Bidders and Terms of Reference and all drawings) may be secured personally, upon payment of a non-refundable amount indicated in the above from the following address:

Development Support Services Center
United Nations Development Programme
7th Floor NEDA sa Makati Building
106 Amorsolo Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City (via courier)
Tel. No. (632) 892 06 11 loc. 275
Fax No. (632) 816 40 61 / 893 2610 / 1864061
E-mail address : bc admin.ph@undp.org

International suppliers are encouraged to appoint and authorize Philippine-based counterparts to secure the bidding documents and submit proposals for and in their behalf.

The abovementioned Bidding Documents will be released to all interested parties strictly from 6– 15 April 2004 only. The Bidding Documents shall contain all instructions on the rules, procedures, bid opening dates, other schedules and requirements.

Bids must be delivered to the address below until 12.00 Noon of 7 May 2004. Late bids will be rejected. Pre-bid conferences for Contracts 1 and 2 will be conducted at the Romulo Hall, Ground Floor, NEDA sa Makati Building, on 16 April 2004, 10.30 AM and 2.30 PM, respectively.

UNDP reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect or informality therein, accept the bid and award the contract to the most advantageous offer to the UNDP based on UNDP criteria. UNDP assumes no obligation or responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred for the preparation of bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made for this Contract.

(Sgd) **ETHELIND B. CAPUNO**
Manager, DSSC

(PDI Apr 4 & 5, 2004)

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MMS seen gaining popularity in 2004

By Alexander F. Villafania

THE YEAR 2004 is expected to see an uptake of multimedia messaging service (MMS) in the Philippines as the country's telecommunications firms start transitions to 3G networks, according to an executive of an organization of mobile phone manufacturers.

Although MMS numbers continue to pale in comparison against figures of the more popular text messaging service, John Lipp, president of the Global mobile Suppliers Association (GSA) Asia-Pacific, said one critical aspect for MMS should be ease of use akin to that of SMS, so that subscribers would have more reason to use MMS aside from just sending short messages.

"For today's level of infrastructure, services that are oriented around MMS are going to be the driver of new revenues. A rule of thumb is that 30 percent of the handsets in the subscriber base require a certain feature before you can market services that use that feature successfully, Lipp said.

Lipp said that MMS is a key driver to the transition from GSM to 3G communications, which is expected to blur the line between mobile communications and the landline-based Internet.

According to Lipp, the Philippines has enough "critical mass" to develop a mobile Internet community, which would be the next level of mobile communications.

Wireless content delivery faces decades-old problem

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tors, to-do lists and calendars can co-exist comfortably with your SIM's contact list. Gemplus even says that this is a better solution since you can use your SIM card on any phone even when the device breaks down. Just transfer the SIM to another device and off you go. Sun Microsystems also advocates the smart card solution because most smart chip-based identification, security and verification apps are written in Java.

But this still doesn't answer the question of how to deliver data from wireless content providers to telcos then, ultimately, to the wireless subscriber. How do you send rich multimedia data through wireless networks without clogging the line and without having to rewrite apps like what they used to do with WAP and AvantGo?

Fledgling Singapore company Radixs Pte Ltd. has a different approach to the problem.

Radixs has a new method of delivering multimedia data from existing applications and servers to any mobile device.

R. Chandrasekar, co-founder and CEO of Radixs, said that its patent-pending Motion eXperience Interface (MXI) mobile operating system allows existing applications or data from a telco to be delivered to any mobile device using existing wireless networks without having to reformat the data or rewrite the applications residing on the content provider's or the telcos' servers.

"MXI enables existing legacy desktop applications and rich media content without the need for conversion and redevelopment," Chandrasekar said.

Client-server

This means that an application or multimedia data from a provider residing on a telco's server can be delivered wirelessly to mobile devices without having to rewrite the software. This is important since multimedia data are in varied file formats, and there is no single universal program that can open all of those files. In short, there is no Tower of Babel in the computer industry.

This is precisely the reason why a "light" version of Windows exists for Smartphones, and yet another version is there for the PocketPC. There are also Pocket versions of Excel, Word and Explorer. These are rewritten from the original and made to reside on the handheld device.

Chandrasekar says that with MXI as your wireless platform, you don't need to reformat and redevelop applications. These will all be called from the telco's server independent of the bearer, the bearer being the protocol through which the data is being sent (like wi-fi, GPRS, EDGE or 3G).

MXI is a telco-centric solution, where the applications, data and all the content reside on the telco's servers. Fees are levied on the users depending on the services they need from the telco. For example, if a subscriber wants to purchase video service from the telco, a certain fee will be charged. You want e-mail and messaging? Pay another fee. Same goes for any other applications, whether personal or enterprise.

An advantage of this type of setup lies with MXI's technology. On the telco's end, they can have an application server where popular services like spreadsheet, word processing, e-mail, media player or presentation software reside. On the subscriber's side, all he or she has on the phone is the 8-Mb MXI software. Everything would then be pumped in through the telco's wireless network. It's a classic client-server setup.

For example, if a subscriber receives a video attachment and he or she is subscribed to the telco's e-mail and video service, the subscriber can open his or her mail and view the video on the mobile device via streaming technology (you don't need to download the video file to your phone and waste storage space). In this example, the subscriber does not have to download the video attachment. The MXI-based phone or laptop or PDA then becomes a dumb terminal.

Chandrasekar says MXI-based phones or PDAs become a hybrid thin client and fat client device because thin clients cannot print while MXI devices can do so. If you want your contact lists, schedules or tasks and calendars to be printed out, you can do so. At the same time, all these data in your personal information manager (PIM) are mirrored in the telco's database so you can still download them to your SIM when your phone breaks down.

Streaming video and audio, even televised programs that are already digitized, can be transferred from the MXI server to any MXI client. Any Web page out there could also be viewed. When viewing a Web page, the HTML code does not need to be rewritten. The MXI phone or PDA intelligently reformats the Web page onscreen, not the code from the server end. Same thing with existing enterprise programs like SAP or Oracle.

Industry impact

As a client-server solution, all the security is placed on the telco's side. From firewalls to anti-virus and file management—everything is taken cared of by the telco. And, since you can't download files to the MXI client and the server won't allow you to write anything on board, security is controlled (against viruses, worms and hackers). The MXI phone or PDA becomes a dumb client while the telco's server does all the work.

Radixs' intellectual property in this entire business proposal is its software technology to allow existing apps to be displayed on a client's screen wirelessly, and how the server issues commands for the display to change when a user command (like scrolling down or clicking on an icon) is issued from the client. The commands are made on the telco server side, while the image onscreen is reformatted locally on the handheld device. In effect, the server tells the MXI phone or PDA to "go generate" this button or "go generate" this scroll bar then "go generate" the latest text input.

How will Radixs earn from this? Radixs will charge the telco a fixed subscription rate per month per number of users. It will also charge the telco a one-time integration fee. On the handset manufacturer side, Radixs will charge the PDA and phone makers a royalty fee per device shipped.

A pilot project of the solution is ongoing in Cannes, France using a 3G network, while a live demonstration using the SingTel network was given to reporters in Singapore recently.

How will such a solution affect the industry?

For device makers, the MXI solution takes away the processing part of the equation and puts the load on the telco's server, enabling handset and mobile device manufacturers to build cheaper and lighter phones or PDAs with only the required amount of memory, processing power or storage space.

For telcos, they would become some sort of a wireless application service provider (ASP). They need to invest on more storage space and server requirements since they would be managing their subscribers' files and they would need more computing power for the different services and applications they want to offer. Additionally, they may have to pay extra fee to software makers such as Microsoft, SAP or Oracle or other app they want to offer since they open up the service to wireless subscribers. They would also have to continuously widen their pipes.

For content developers, they could concentrate on delivering services—such as games or streaming audio and video—without worrying about the format with which they develop their applications. No more Tower of Babel. That is, if the telco they're targeting is on the MXI platform.

For subscribers, they may have to pay extra fees since they apply for each service they want to get. They may also have to pay for storage space. Moreover, they may have to spend more airtime and data usage fee while watching streaming video or browsing through and processing files on the telco's file server.

Philippine context

In the Philippines, the MXI solution will be difficult to accept since wireless service providers usually require content providers to build their own services and run them from their own servers. It would take a considerable amount of investment for the telco to become a wireless ASP with Radixs' telco-centric offering.

This whole idea goes directly against the fat client protagonists in the mobile space. On the software side, you have Microsoft, Symbian OS and Palm. On the hardware side, you have Intel which makes the integrated chips for phones, PalmOne and most of the cellular phone makers targeting the high end such as Nokia and Sony Ericsson.

In summary, the question of delivering rich multimedia content to wireless users goes back to the battle between thin and fat clients on the end-user side, and on the battle for service responsibility on the server side. The telcos are investing billions on their networks, so they expect others—content providers and subscribers most of all—to bear the brunt of future costs.

Now that the technological ingredients are there—the bandwidth, the devices and the multimedia content—we're starting to see even more complexities thrown into the mix, complexities that have been in existence since local area networking began. Also, getting the right balance of having dumb, thin clients or fat, intelligent devices is becoming a consideration all over again. In the background, security questions and privacy invasion still hound the network, so some may ask why the industry should entrust everything on a server connected at one point to the big, bad Internet.

That is why—despite the availability of powerful phones and PDAs—people still view TV shows on their TVs, listen to radio programs on their portable radios, surf the Web using their PCs, play their interactive games using their gaming consoles and read their e-mail and attachments using their notebooks.

As users continue to dream about having rich media delivered wirelessly to their laptops, PDAs or cellular phones, it is ironic to think that the IT industry's problem for the last 20 years still applies to the wireless future.

IBM backs Filipino . . .

From page B12

He said that Ocampo was looking at putting together a fund or syndicate of schools and businesses that would invest in SpecOps.

"He wants the Philippines to own a chunk of (SpecOps), and at the same time, allowing AIM to do a case study on us," Lewis added.

Ocampo eventually said he wanted SpecOps to serve as a "role model" for small to medium enterprises that want to break into the global market for software.

LEWIS

Invitations

Late last year, SpecOps attracted top computer vendors Hewlett-Packard and some foreign investors to consider investing into David.

In an informal meeting at the De La Salle University last year, Lewis said that executives from Hewlett Packard, and Oracle Corp. expressed interest to market and bundle the David middleware with its own products.

IBM, through its local subsidiary, was among the first vendors to communicate its intent to license the middleware and bundle it with its own set of products.

The local subsidiary of HP also wrote SpecOps expressing its interest to market the software.

Also last year, Peter Valdes, co-founder of the software firm Tivoli which IBM eventually bought for $750 million, committed his software development firm Vsoft Inc. to help fund and co-develop the middleware.

After six months of negotiations with Valdes, who now sits as a director/partner in the company, he eventually pledged to infuse an additional $1 billion to SpecOps to fund to the commercial development of the middleware.

"Valdes wants this software to be the next Tivoli," the executive said during a briefing that was attended by executives from Oracle, Acer, Technopaq, Alphabeans Systems, MSI-Digiland and Bitstop Network Services Inc.

Banker backers

In a company brief, it was noted that Vsoft intends to acquire a substantial share of SpecOps. Lewis said that Vsoft, through funding from a group of US-based investment bankers, wanted a 75-percent stake of the company.

However, SpecOps declined an initial offer made by Vsoft.

Currently, SpecOps is working with the De La Salle University (DLSU) in the development of the prototype of David, with Caslon Chua, graduate school director of the College of Computer Studies of DLSU, heading the project.

About 40 to 50 students have been tapped to work on the system design and the prototype that is set to be ready by the first quarter of 2004, Chua told Infotech.

"DLSU is doing this as part of a major research project for students. My involvement here is more academic than business driven," Chua admitted.

Chua is now dubbed the "chief software architect" of David, while Valdes takes on the role of project manager.

Late last year, Lewis said that SpecOps was also at the final stages of signing a tri-party development agreement involving the National Computer Center and DLSU.

Breakthrough

In its company brief, the company quoted Bill Joy, founder of Sun Microsystems, as saying: "The next breakthrough in software will not come from Sun or even Microsoft, but from people and companies that we cannot know today." The SpecOps brief was implying that the company would deliver that next software breakthrough Joy was talking about.

But just as Microsoft's chief software architect Bill Gates started his company from scratch, this little software start-up was on the brink of bankruptcy and beset with legal problems.

The company almost suffered a major setback last year when its former chief software architect, Filipino Henry Ligsay, allegedly left the company to join another firm, almost taking with him the company's bread and butter. Since it was his idea, he insisted that he owned the rights to the software. Thus, a legal battle between SpecOps and Ligsay ensued until it ended last year in a settlement.

By a simple twist of fate, SpecOps chief executive Lewis and sales director Edward Mangan—with a handful of Filipino employees—decided to allow Caslon Chua, graduate school director of the College of Computer Studies of DLSU, to head the development of David.

Under the leadership of Chua, SpecOps has moved forward, and as they say, the rest is history.

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Converting metafile objects to Word picture objects

POWERTIPS

By Jerry Liao

WHEN you insert a picture inside Microsoft Word, you may notice that the "Rotate" icon is deactivated. To activate your rotate icon, you should convert your pictures to Word picture objects. Here's how:

1) Select picture or clipart you want to convert.

2) Click on the "Ungroup" or the "Disassemble Picture" button.

3) Select "Draw/Group" from "Drawing" toolbar.

4) Click on "Rotate" button, rotate your picture

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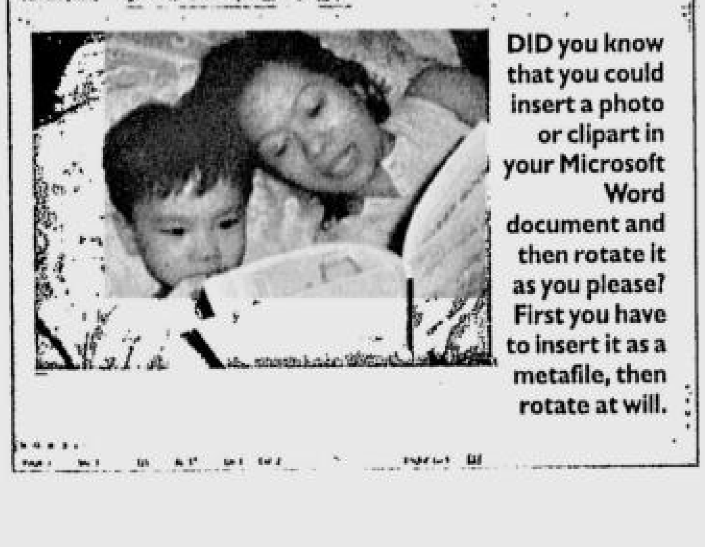

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INFOTECH
E-mail: pr_info_tech@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Leo Magno

IBM backs Filipino software startup battling Microsoft

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

HISTORY is repeating itself as computer giant IBM, through a Filipino software startup, is once again set to battle software behemoth Microsoft Corp. in the $30-billion market for computer operating systems.

Back in the '80s, IBM and Microsoft were at loggerheads as they competed for the lucrative market of computer operating systems. But Microsoft won after it unleashed the Windows operating system, which eventually killed DOS and IBM's subsequent OS 2.0 project. Ironically, OS 2.0 involved a close collaboration between Microsoft and IBM.

Last year, a Filipino software startup called SpecOps Labs (formerly known as Softlabs) began an ambitious project which would eventually put them directly against Microsoft.

Early this year, SpecOps struck gold when IBM decided to back them up as they prepared to go public at the United States Stock Exchange following a merger with a Canadian construction company.

According to SpecOps Labs chief executive Frederick Lewis, the public listing of the company would turn the Filipino software company into a P3-billion firm.

In an e-mail message to Lewis on March 28, Victor Silvino, country manager of IBM Business Partners of IBM Philippines, indicated that the computer giant was "keen on supporting (SpecOps) both from a hardware and software perspective."

"This is a major development for the company," Lewis later told Infotech, as the company's stocks soared to $1.01 a share as of Thursday night, Manila time.

Lewis disclosed that the listing became possible with the merger with the Canadian construction firm, which was moving out of the construction business and into the information technology business.

He said that the Canadian company offered 70 percent of its shares in exchange for "access" to SpecOps Labs' software product called "David."

David is a middleware conceptualized and developed by SpecOps to allow Windows applications to run on open source system Linux.

Following the public listing, Lewis said that another company called Trilogy Systems is expected to make an offer to buy into the Filipino software company.

Lewis said that the fresh infusion of capital would advance the commercial release of its software product within the year.

"Based on the technology that we now have, we can now run at 100-percent efficiency. Because of this capability, these companies are coming to us. For us this means that overnight, we're going to turn into a multi-billion peso company," Lewis added.

Based on earlier projections of SpecOps, David (formerly known as Moses) would generate revenues of $660,000 in its first year of operations from licensing the software to white box system builders in the United States, and a major strategic original equipment manufacturer, which is IBM.

On its third year, the company expects to hit minimum revenues of $90 million from licenses alone.

The company is downplaying that its software would be competing with Microsoft's Windows operating system.

However, SpecOps indicated that David would undercut Microsoft's dominant position in the operating system market, as original equipment manufacturers and white box system builders would be able to build Linux boxes that are able to run Windows applications.

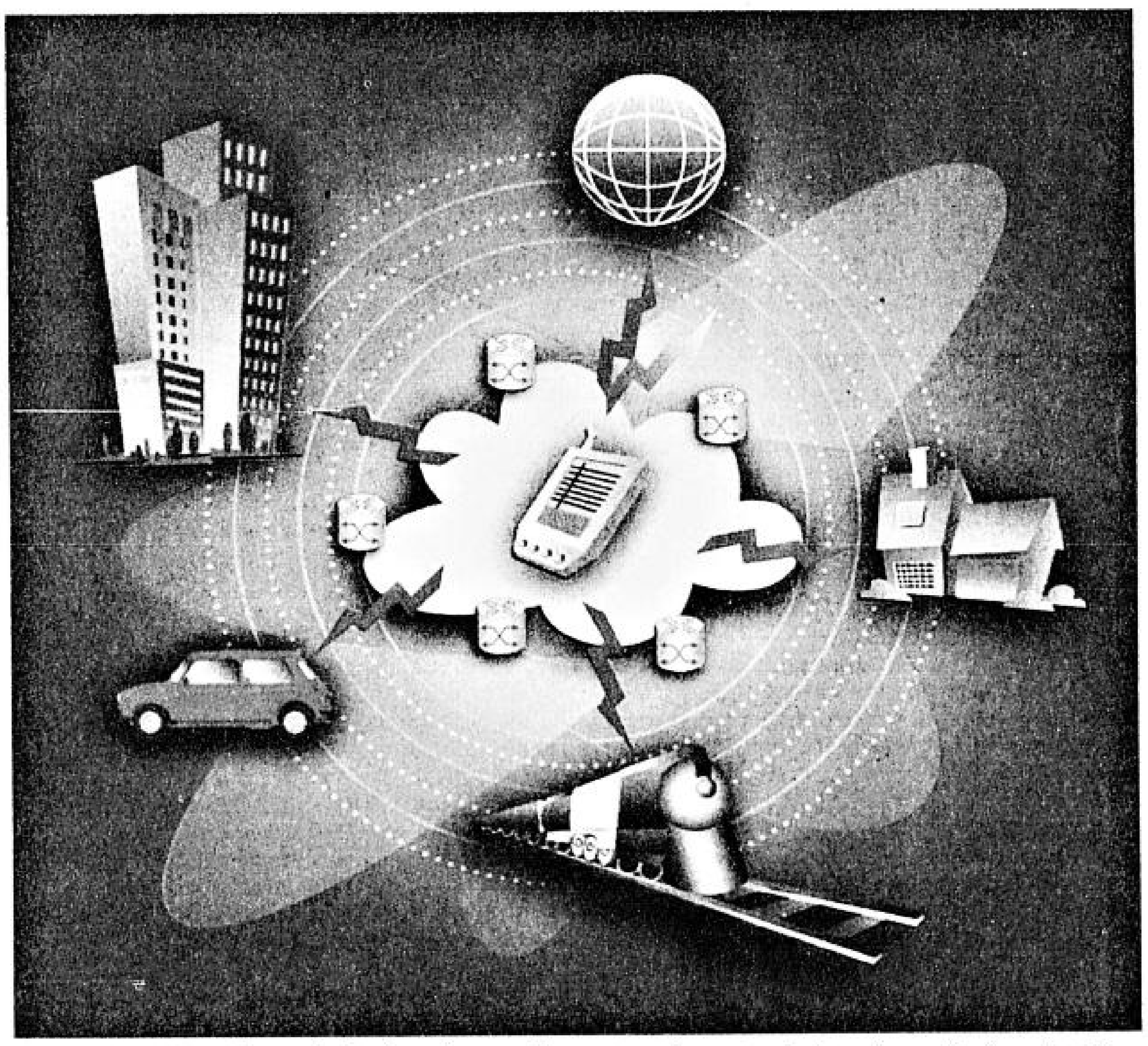
Over $30 billion are spent yearly on operating system software, and about 300 million operating system copies are shipped every year, according to SpecOPs.

Early this year, SpecOps caught the attention of former finance secretary and current president of Asian Institute of Management (AIM) Robert Ocampo, Lewis said.

IBM/B11

Wireless content delivery faces decades-old problem

By Leo Magno



THE ULTIMATE **mobile warrior has long dreamt of having his data, comprised of varied rich media in different formats, sent to him from a remotely situated server to wherever he is. In a car, at home, at the office or on a train to another place, one's entertainment and enterprise applications should ideally be accessible. However, network and architecture problems, along with the difficulty of dealing with varied data types, are still barring us from enjoying these benefits.**

SPECIAL REPORT

ONE of the biggest frustrations of mobile users is the lack of rich content they get from supposedly "high-tech" wireless networks like wireless fidelity (also known as wi-fi or the 802.11 standard), GPRS (general packet radio service), EDGE or 3G (third-generation mobile communications). Now that operators have the wireless bandwidth available, consumers are supposed to benefit by getting rich multimedia like audio, video and messaging and file management services, right?

Wrong.

The problem proves the proverbial chicken-and-egg theory, where telcos build expensive wireless broadband networks hoping that a cornucopia of multimedia services would come flooding in through the plumbings of the newly installed big pipe. At the same time, other telcos decide to hold on to their pockets and hold off the construction of such expensive wireless broadband networks until multimedia content developers are ready to deploy their applications and services. Others hold off until wireless devices are made available, such as handheld personal digital assistants with longer battery lives and built-in wi-fi receivers or GPRS- and 3G-capable phones with bigger color screens.

However, the demanding problem goes farther than supply and demand. The critical problem is more than critical mass. In the wireless space, we are seeing a repeat of what has been happening to the information technology (IT) industry for the last two decades or more. It has something to do about networking and different, and often incompatible data formats, and this time it's happening to the wireless network.

Sending the data

Before operators, content developers and mobile handheld manufacturers started making those huge investments, they disregarded the first thing which formed the foundation of being able to provide content over wireless networks: How are you going to deliver data from the source to the destination handheld?

Primitive solutions came out as stripped-down versions of existing Web content. Earlier years saw the rise of wireless markup language (WML), a hybrid of HTML (hypertext markup language), the native tongue of the World Wide Web. This was then delivered to phones that were WAP-capable (wireless application protocol). Another was AvantGo, which allows content providers to offer their Web content to personal digital assistant (PDA) users.

However, both solutions were essentially limited text versions of the original HTML content. This was dictated by two factors: the narrow bandwidth the data had to go through, and the limited screen space of cellular phones and PDAs. Operators couldn't pump entire Web pages through their networks, and end-users couldn't view them anyway on their handhelds, so they just used text via WAP and AvantGo. They couldn't make handhelds speak in the vernacular (HTML) either, so they stripped the language down into "dialects" like WAP.

Fat and thin clients

Today, with GPRS and EDGE in place in the Philippines and 3G in full, slow swing in some countries, operators now have more leeway. What's more, handhelds today have more memory, processing power and screen real estate to enable them to view rich multimedia content like audio, video and full-sized (in terms of kilobytes) Web pages.

However, wireless rich media provision today is being done through brute force. With the proper bandwidth and devices already available, Web pages and unzipped files are being sent as they are back and forth at wi-fi cafés and even through the cellular networks. It is only a matter of time, however, till the country's GPRS networks get clogged and telcos start experiencing storage problems.

The fact is that as data instead of voice continues to hog cellular and other wireless networks, data size and requirements are getting bigger, especially with multimedia content. This makes data delivery from the content provider to the telco to the end-user an increasingly important consideration.

This, in turn, creates another problem. Handheld manufacturers are beefing up their phones and PDAs and are trying to place the applications and all the intelligence on their hardware products. We're seeing more phones from Nokia and Sony Ericsson which are turning into PDAs, and more PDAs from Palm and various PocketPC manufacturers which are turning into phones. With increased memory, better processors and longer battery lives, these handhelds are regressing to the 1980s paradigm of personal computing which seeks to place everything and anything into the PC instead of relying on the network and the server.

On one hand you have Microsoft Corp. which practically revolutionized the PC industry, and is now bringing that same idea to mobile phones via its Smartphone software and to PDAs via the PocketPC. On the other you have PalmOne, which is offering the new generation Palm hardware-software combo as an alternative PDA-phone solution. Then again there is the Symbian OS which is being controlled by major phone manufacturers like Nokia and Sony Ericsson.

The net effect is that handheld devices, instead of being thin clients by their very nature, are turning into fat ones similar to what happened during the PC paradigm. You have all the slimmed-down versions of word processing and spreadsheet apps in there. You have a media player to play MP3 files and video of different formats. You have your messaging and e-mail clients in the mobile device and you have storage space for attachments and document creation.

In short, your mobile device is turning into a PC or a fat client, no matter how much phone and PDA manufacturers deny it.

On the other side of the fence you have the memory device and storage manufacturers which advocate that files and even applications should reside in external memory instead of in the built-in storage and memory space. This army is led by flash memory producers and smart card manufacturers.

Today, many vendors use flash memory formats like compact flash, secure digital, XD and Sony's own memory stick which are targeted at mobile devices. As memory prices continue to plummet, flash memory is becoming a viable form of storage not just for files but for entire applications.

An example is a partnership with game manufacturers wherein you get new games in flash memory cards plus extra space for saving games, something Nokia is currently doing with its N-Gage handheld console/phone. These same flash cards are used by digital camera manufacturers to store pictures, and some of them come bundled with photo editing software. Yet another example is the USB thumb drive, and some of them are loaded with promotional applications or freeware.

Current flash card capacities continue to get bigger while prices are dropping. Samsung Electronics recently announced that it has developed and will soon ship in volume a flash memory product that can store up to 4 gigabytes of data—more than enough to store phone and PDA applications along with the files and documents produced with such apps.

Yet another alternative are smart cards. Smart cards are used in the industry not just as IDs but also on phones and financial transactions. Your cellular phone's SIM (subscriber identity module) card and the smart chip on your credit card are examples.

As smart chip memory increases (SIM capacities in the 128-Kb and 256-Kb range), smart card manufacturers like Gemplus are advocating that more applications be placed in smart chips rather than on board in the mobile device. Simple add-on apps like calcula-

WIRELESS/B11

CAMPBELL

Executive nixes possibility of Sun-Itanium combination

By Leo Magno

SUN Microsystems Inc. has no plans of using Intel Corp.'s Itanium microprocessor in its server products and believes that Itanium is headed toward a technological dead-end, according to a Sun official.

Steve Campbell, Sun vice president for enterprise systems, told reporters that the future of Itanium is in question and therefore his company has no plans of adopting Intel's 64-bit chip.

"Itanium on Sun is not going to happen," said Campbell. "I see no future for a Sun product with an Itanium processor. We have no intention whatsoever in supporting Itanium."

Campbell said this at the heels of launching a 64-bit blade server based on AMD's Opteron chip. Sun announced its alliance with AMD on Nov. 17, 2003 and launched an AMD-based server, the Sun Fire V20Z, on Feb. 10, 2004.

AMD is Intel's rival on the x86 processor architecture. Itanium is Intel's 64-bit chip, while Opteron is AMD's version of it.

64-bit computing is being heralded as the next generation of computing architectures because it allows more data to be processed and pushed through memory and logical processors within a computer. For non-nerds, this simply means that 64-bit computing is faster than the current 32-bit processors and 32-bit software that run on most of today's systems.

Sun itself was the first to introduce 64-bit computing in the early 1990s, but you needed 64-bit software written under an architecture called Reduced Instruction Set Computing (RISC) to run on those machines. Meanwhile, Intel was pushing through with Complex Instruction Set Computing (CISC) on the 32-bit platform which was incompatible with RISC. In 2000, Intel announced its 64-bit Itanium processor which hit production snags, and then eventually announced Itanium2.

Production race

Despite the production delays, computer companies like Hewlett-Packard and Dell waited and adopted Intel's Itanium. Meanwhile, AMD pulled the rug from under Intel by releasing in volume quantities its own 64-bit Opteron chip.

Sun eventually woke up and acknowledged the existence of a wealth of software for the x86 CISC platform, and started offering servers based on Intel's 32-bit Xeon. When CISC grew up to 64-bit, however, Sun chose AMD's Opteron over Intel's Itanium.

"On the 64-bit space, there's probably only 3 percent of servers based on Itaniums out there," said Campbell. "Itanium is expensive, it's very hot. Itanium is not gonna happen."

Campbell added that even Intel's own investment in Itanium is "suspect."

"Intel's investment and support for Itanium is in question," he said. "Today they're throwing their resources at Yamhill."

Yamhill, as far as Intel's product roadmap is concerned, is Intel's next-generation 64-bit chip which can run both legacy 32-bit software and existing and future 64-bit software.

Infotech tried to get Intel's side and asked for reactions, but no executive from the chipmaker was available to comment.

Campbell insists, though, that Sun's own 64-bit platform based on UltraSparc will not diminish even with the advent of more "mainstream" chips on the x86 64-bit space.

"Sun's Opteron product is a different case," he said. "It's in the high-volume, low-cost processor space in the scale-out strategy, while UltraSparc are the ones we use to scale-up."

By this, Campbell meant that Opteron will be used in the "scale-out" or horizontal data center expansion market, where you use cheaper, smaller servers linked together in a cluster to increase computing power. UltraSparc is for Sun's "scale-up" or vertical server expansion strategy, where you deploy applications and beef up the processing power of large servers instead of buying smaller ones and hooking them all up together as nodes to cooperatively speed up computing.

BUSINESS Monday

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Youngest treasurer is tough lady who loves clothes

By Michelle V. Remo

SHE never planned to become the national treasurer.

Working for the Bureau of Treasury, she was simply doing a favor for a friend who needed assistance in the overwhelming job at the treasury department.

"When Boy (former National Treasurer Sergio Edeza) was assigned to become treasurer during the Estrada administration, he said he needed an assistant. I accepted the invitation but told him I could only work as his part-time secretary," says National Treasurer Mina Figueroa.

But when Edeza convinced her to work as his deputy treasurer, she couldn't say no. After all, Mina was the one who encouraged her colleague and former boss to take the job as national treasurer.

'Extremely tough'

Mina admits working for the treasury department, especially at a time when the government is facing a huge budget deficit and a burgeoning debt, is not an easy task.

The former banker describes her work at the treasury as "extremely tough." She has the daunting task of funding the republic and managing the liabilities of the government.

Asked about the most challenging part of her job, she says it would have to be selling the Philippines to capital investors at a time of political uncertainty and media highlighting the negative more than the positive things about the country.

BUREAU OF THE TREASURY

FIGUEROA

"Part of my job is to allay fears of investors. But you (media) are the ones making it difficult," says Mina, adding that "too much" democracy and a "very free press" make it hard for people in the government to convince investors that the Philippines is not as bad as what it looks like in the news.

Correcting misinterpretations

She adds that oftentimes, small negative details that do not deserve emphasis are highlighted in the news, creating false notions about the government's real fiscal position.

To somehow ease the adverse effects of negative news, Mina says, she exerts effort to correct misquotes and misinterpretations by reporters.

"Apart from granting interviews, I take time to give reporters an analysis of government data and explain what the figures they report really mean," she says.

Mina adds that news reports on data such as government debt and deficits would not create a negative notion if reasons behind them are well explained.

Making a big deal

On the fear of political uncertainty because of the coming elections, Mina says people seem to be just making a big deal out of it. For her, the market should not fear much about a change of government leaders because reform programs have already been institutionalized.

"I believe there should be no such thing as uncertainty because whoever wins the elections will work for the same reforms. Maybe they will work on a different tack, but they will still aim and achieve the same results," she says.

Smart, slim and single

The smart, slim and still-single Mina adds that assuming the post as national treasurer meant a lifestyle change. Since she became treasurer in February, she had cut her visits to the gym from thrice to only once a week. The job also meant spending more time at work.

"Before I became treasurer, people at home would think I've come from a dinner every time I go home late. But now, when I go home late, it doesn't necessarily mean I've eaten. It simply means I had tons of work during the day," she says.

Mina, an accounting graduate from the University of Santo Tomas, says one of the things she learned about working for government was having to cut on her spending. With a relatively smaller salary than when she worked for the private sector, Mina now practices more prudence in using her money.

"Maybe it also helps that I am still single," she says.

What she can't forego, however, is visiting the mall for clothes. After assuming the highest post at the treasury, she says she couldn't wear very comfortable and too casual clothes even on weekends, knowing she could be seen by anyone in the business circle anytime.

The always well-dressed Mina also says she likes going to bazaars for clothes.

For Mina, keeping a respectable image is important, especially when one deals with capital market players who seem to always test the tenacity of the government in maintaining interest rates at low levels.

'Who blinks first'

During the first few auctions for treasury bills and bonds when she was already the national treasurer, Mina ruled for the rejection of bids.

In press briefings after each auction, she would emphasize that the government is not desperate for cash to accept high bids placed by investors, mostly banks.

THE NEW National Treasurer has a soft heart

"In the market, they will test you. It's a matter of who blinks first," she says.

Some may think her high standards are keeping her from getting attached to a man, but Mina says the high standards thought of her are perceptions of the people she works with. Strong as she seems, she says being firm is just one of the requirements of her work.

If Mina seems unrelenting during auctions, the country's youngest-ever woman national treasurer has in fact a soft heart and enjoys simple pleasures. Her pastimes include reading light humorous books and cooking seafood pasta.

For Mina, her stint in the private sector and the government both require a huge sense of responsibility.

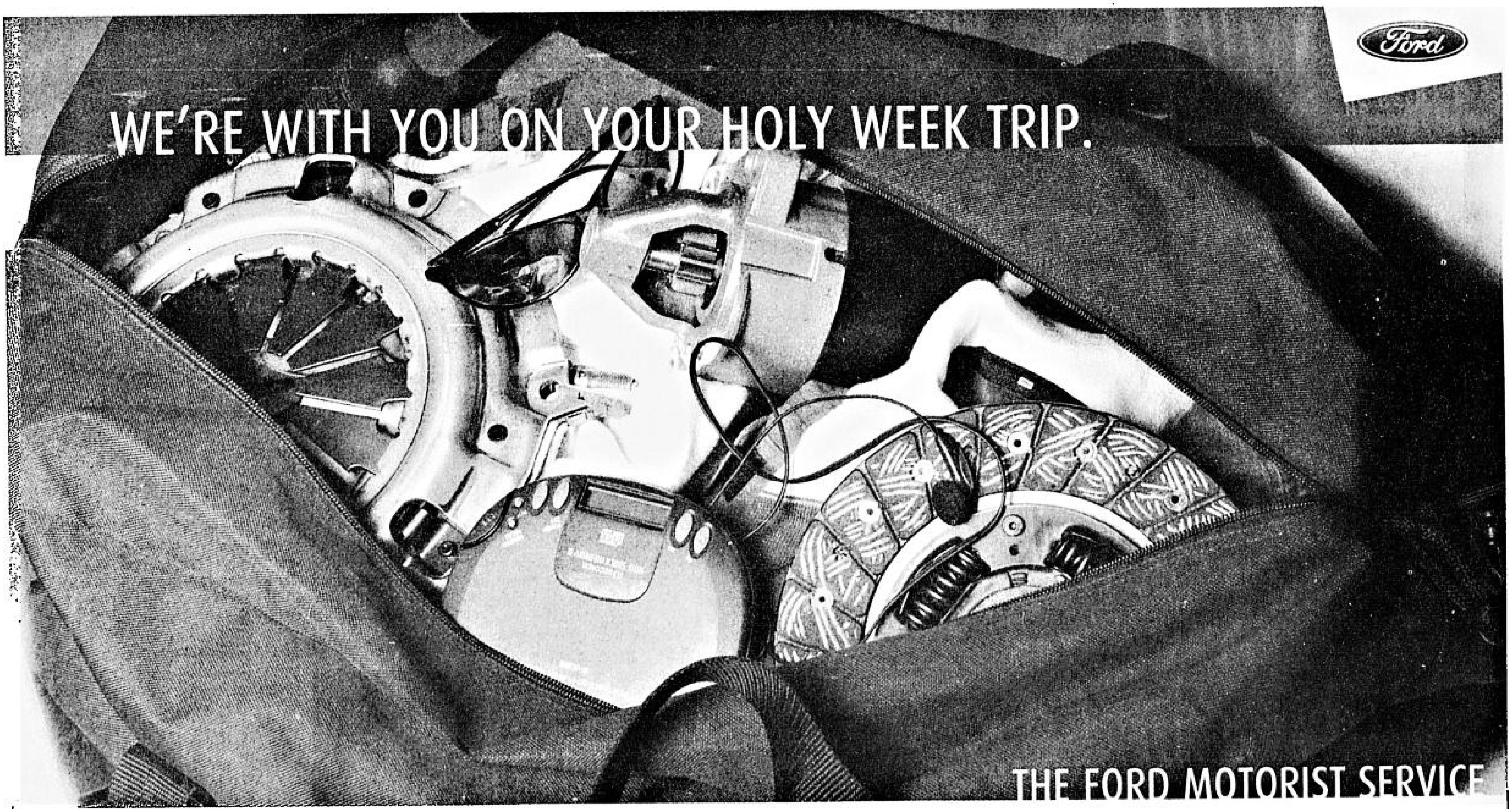
Asked to describe working for the government, the former senior vice president of Security Bank said public service is "very humbling."

Prior to Security Bank she was a staff of the Treasury Department of the Central Bank. Her first job was as a technical staff at SGV & Co. for four years.

Mina adds that joining the Treasury Department changed her notion of the government.

While some negative perceptions of the government are indeed true, she says, there are a lot more inspiring and noble things in government, such as seeing people with the sincere intentions to serve the country.

"There are a lot of good people who really deserve to be there, and I'm glad to be working with them," she says.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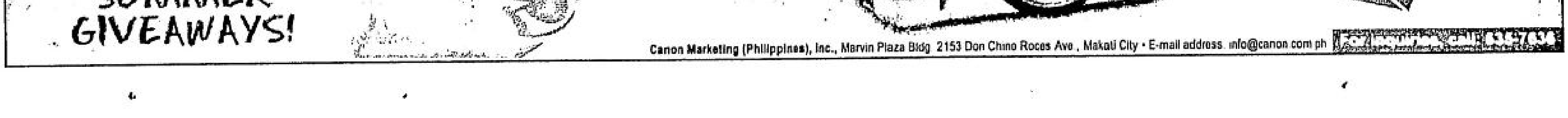
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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Family health camp at The Farm

IF YOU have been planning that dream retreat at all levels of mind, body and spirit, but could not get to align it with your kids' active life, The Farm at San Benito in Lipa, Batangas provides you an option that combines health, recreation and togetherness.

The world-class facility people have been hearing about opens its 9-hectare grounds to a family health camp for the Holy Week on April 5 to 11 that will take kids away from a toxic environment, their lungs relieved from polluted air, their eating devoid of processed, chemical junk food, there to enjoy a nurturing into a meaningful, healthy life.

The health resort provides a venue for mothers and fathers to explore an optimum wellness program utilizing natural treatments integrating living food nutrition, 5 to 7-day detoxification, exercise and spiritual development programs, and spa treatments supervised by the medical staff.

A lineup of activities has been designed to harness youthful energies into a creative lifestyle. Instructors will conduct children's yoga, art attack, and handicrafts classes. Kids will enjoy interacting with nature through gardening, seed planting and sprouting, and learn to whip up their own health food. They even get to learn massage.

For young, active bodies, there will be plenty of swimming in kid-friendly pools, kite-flying at the open field, traditional Filipino games, horseback riding, nature trail walks, to be capped by story-telling by the bonfire and pajama party in the evening and a grand Easter egg hunt on Sunday.

Children also get to join their parents in a workshop on Emotional Intelligence and learn "conscious walking" exercises.

An array of nutritiously delicious dishes to satisfy kiddie palates, too, fresh from natural organic sources will be available in set meals or ala carte at the restaurant.

Air-conditioned accommodations range from rustic, charming thatched cottages to villas with open-sky showers. The luxury health resort offers a special family package that includes free room accommodation for two children 12 years and below plus 50 percent on meal rates and minimum fees for activity materials with economy rates for *yayas*.

Call Lipa direct 696-3175 and 696-3795 or the Mandarin Oriental Hotel booking office 751-3498 amd 751-3497. To learn more about The Farm at San Benito, log on at www.thefarm.com.ph.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT CONTRACT SIGNING

FPDSavills Philippines Inc, the pioneer and leading international property management company in the country, has recently renewed its contract with Wack Wack Twin Towers Condominium Corp. Wack Wack Twin Towers Condominium is one of the most prestigious high-rise residential and commercial condominiums at the heart of Barangay Wack Wack in East Greenhills. The 32-story twin towers are occupied by upper middle-class tenants. It is a veritable source of sales and promotional opportunities. Present during the contract signing were (from left) engineer Albert L. Briones, associate director for property operations, FPDSavills, Dr. Margaret Cheng, secretary, Wack Wack Condominium, Justice Fernando A. Santiago, president, Wack Wack Condominium, Elizabeth G. Rabuy, director and general manager, FPDSavills and Nikki B. Gilladoga, associate director for business development, FPDSavills.

DESIGNER WHEY AT POWER-LIFTING TILT

Designer Whey, America's number one protein shake, was a sponsor at the recently concluded Philippine national power-lifting competition held at Robinsons' Metro East. Shown at the Designer Whey display booth with the Powerlifitng Association of the Philippines secretary general Nina Oca are (from left) Charles Lim, Allan Tanchiong and Greggy Romualdez, officers of Edgepro, local distributors of the product. Designer Whey products were awarded to the tilt's winners. It is also available at Toby's Sports, Olympic Village, Chris Sports Plaza, Healthfood & Herb, Health Shop, Health & Beyond, Royal Sporting House, Fitness First, Clark Hatch and the Rockwell Club.

Supply Chain

NESTLÉ HONORS PARTNERS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

Nestlé Philippines Inc (NPI) president and CEO Salvador Pigem (center right) presents a special award to the US-Asia Environmental Partnership (AEP) represented by program manager Marie Ricciardone PhD (2nd from right) for the US-AEP's sustained support of NPI's Greening the Supply Chain Program, a continuing initiative to encourage business partners to improve environmental performance while achieving better efficiencies. Assisting Pigem are NPI's John Jessup, EVP technical division (2nd from left), Jess Reyes, AVP corporate environmental services (right) and Robert Feliciano, corporate environmental manager.

Proper antibiotic choice helps reduce bacterial resistance

ANTIBIOTICS, first discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming in the late 1920s, have significantly curbed the worldwide incidence of bacterial infectious diseases. Millions of lives were saved from diseases once thought to be incurable.

Numerous antibiotics have been developed through the years. But despite this, infectious diseases remain a major health problem. The problem is made more difficult by the emergence of strains of bacteria resistant to available antibiotics.

A study published in the Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy reports that the mere use of antibiotics causes disease pathogens to develop resistance to them. With antibiotics being widely used, this makes bacterial antibiotic resistance inevitable.

Dr. Benjamin Co, professor of pharmacology at the University of Santo Tomas, says doctors are now facing a blank wall with no newer and more effective drugs in the picture.

Proper choice, however, of antibiotics will help optimize the outcome of treatment without inducing drug resistance. The following are some of the guidelines that might be of help to both doctor and patient.

Choose drugs that promote greater bacteriological eradication. Co says eradicating the bacterial pathogen is the ultimate goal of antibiotic treatment. This is important in order to achieve optimum clinical success.

Co cites a study published in the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Journal of 123 patients with acute otitis media (AOM), a respiratory tract infection. The study observed that clinical failure is high (37 percent) among patients who were still positive for bacterial infection after four days of antibiotic treatment.

In comparison, clinical failure was observed in only 3 percent of the patients who were culture-negative after four days of antibiotic therapy. The study concluded that clinical failure is associated with the inability to eradicate the causative organism of AOM.

The bacterial pathogen that causes AOM need not only be eradicated in the site of infection, but also prevent its transfer to the nasopharynx-its important reservoir, according to Co. "Failing to do so will allow the spread of bacteria to the environment," he adds.

This is more commonly observed among tuberculosis patients. "Patients who discontinue taking anti-TB drugs after only a few weeks of therapy develop drug-resistant TB, and consequently spread resistant bacterium in the environment," he says.

Co urges medical practitioners to make appropriate antibiotic choices. To do this, accurate diagnosis must first be made. "Correct diagnosis leads to correct antibiotic prescription. Correct antibiotic prescription helps minimize bacterial antibiotic resistance," he adds.

Antibiotic resistance is always first seen in areas wherein penetration of the antibiotic is restricted. "If the antibiotic could hardly get into the site of infection, it is not appropriate for the disease. Not only does it induce drug resistance, it also drains the financial resources of the patient because he/she is taking a drug that does not work," Co explains.

Another study published in the Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy compared the effect of co-amoxiclav to the transfer of penicillin-resistant and penicillin-susceptible S. pneumoniae (PRSP and PSSP) to the nasopharynx with that of cefixime.

It was found that co-amoxiclav reduced the number of patients carrying PSSP and PRSP in their nasopharynx by 90 percent and 60 percent, respectively. In comparison, cefixime was only observed to achieve 30 percent reduction in PSSP, and there was no impact at all in the resistant bacterial strain.

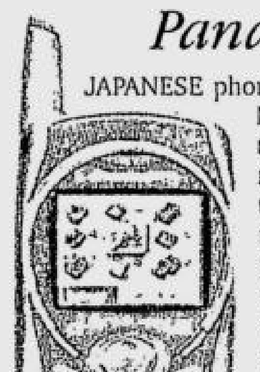
Despite evidence that antibiotics themselves trigger bacterial pathogens to develop resistance to drugs, its role in the treatment of infections among accurately diagnosed patients cannot be disregarded.

Antibiotic treatment indeed reduces the risk of hospitalization and even death. However, correct diagnosis and proper choices must be made to achieve maximum bacterial eradication, optimum clinical outcome, and minimize antibiotic resistance.

Just recently, local pharmaceutical company Natrapharm Inc launched its version of co-amoxiclav during the Philippine College of Chest Physicians 23rd Annual Convention held last March 2 at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel.

ProductFILES

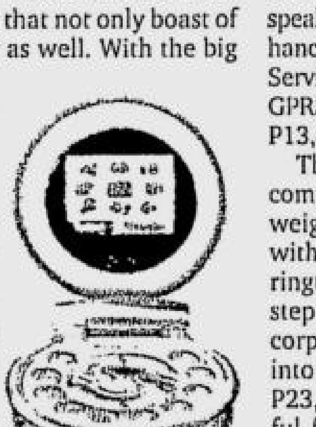
Panasonic unveils 4 new phones



G51E

JAPANESE phone maker Panasonic Mobile Communications Company Ltd recently launched the latest jewels in its new mobile phone range that match your lifestyle and literally fit into the palm of your hand.

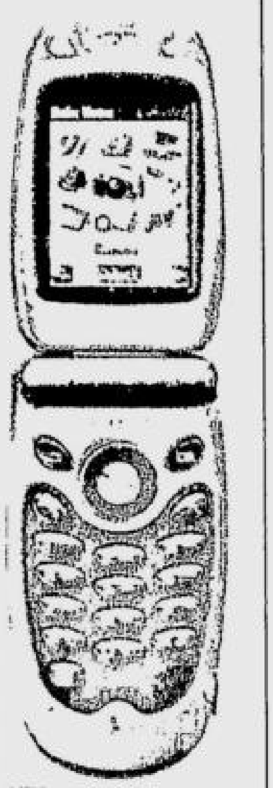
These new handsets-G51 E/M, G70, X66 AND X70-are just the kinds of devices that will drive more users to ultra compact-sized phones that not only boast of style but functionality as well. With the big consumer demand for small-form factor mobile handsets, these new models will definitely give competition a run for their money. Apart from their rich and advanced features, all four units have elegant designs and are easy to use.



G70

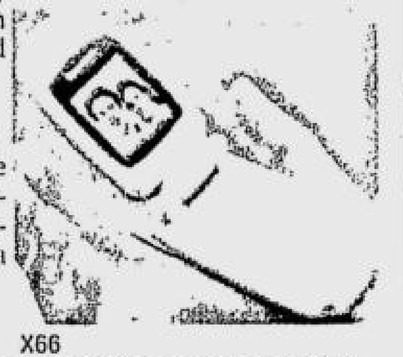
"These four new models are the first in the group of 12 phones that we will introduce in the Philippines this year. We aim to expand our business by 40 percent in 2004 versus 30-percent expansion in 2003," said Hiroshi Otani, Panasonic Philippines' director for system sales during the recent launch at the Peninsula Hotel.

The G51E is a colored tri-band phone, and the G51M is a GPRS-compliant phone, each costing P9,990 (open line). The G70 is specially created for female buyers with features that include a circular clamshell, a handy mirror display acting as a real powder compact, and a display made of 4,096 colors. Panasonic adds biorhythm as a standard feature that shows the graphic presentation on the physiological and physical status to an individual user. The unit also has a speakerphone, Enhanced Messaging Service (EMS) and GPRS and sold at P13,490.



X70

The X66 camera compact shell unit, weighing only 78g with polyphonic ringtones goes one step further by incorporating color and high-quality sound into a tiny package. The 92g X70, priced at P23,490, has bluetooth and offers a beautiful finish and solid build. Other features of the X70 include tri-band, a polyphonic melody composer, photolight and voice recording.



X66

BDO Cash Card empowers

ANOTHER innovation from Banco de Oro, the BDO Cash Card is a powerful cash-dispensing tool that is extraordinarily built to ease and speed up transactions through Mobile Texting, among other features.

Paying bills or sending money vie text is really easy. Money or Globe prepaid airtime can be sent to any recipient with a BDO Cash Card in real time. You can also use it for SM Department Stores, SM Supermarkets, Toy Kingdom, Watsons, Our Home and Ace Hardware for cashless shopping.

Corporations and business owners can take advantage of handling payrolls without having to maintain an account for each employee. This unique feature is designed to streamline unnecessary company expenditures, lessening bank charges and eliminating cash handling risks. Plus, companies can further enhance their image through incorporation of their company's product logo in the card design.

Transactions through BDO Cash Card are safer, with no cash-handling risks. Your mobile transactions are secured with itc unique reference number sent through a confirmation message upon completion.

The BDO Cash Card is simpler, faster, and safer. Call the BDO Call Center at 631-8000 or visit www.bancodeoro.com.ph.

Summer modeling courses

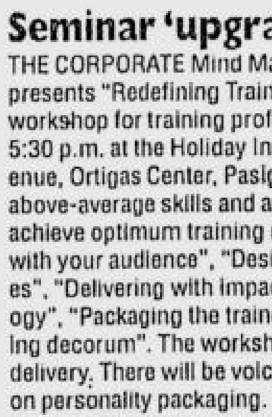
TEENS, boys and girls ages 10 to 18 years old always look forward to a summer of building their self-confidence at Joji Ilagan Career Center. Today, this is the only finishing school in Mindanao that offers self-enhancement course to develop one's self-esteem through various fun-filled courses designed to meet the individual needs of each child. The Summer Charm and Modeling Course is its most popular course. The summer program will be handled by mother and daughter team Joji Ilagan Bian and Dyan Joyce Bian Cortez. Both are graduates of the John Robert Powers Finishing School. Classes start on April 14 until May 22. Enrollment is ongoing at the Joji Ilagan Foundation at Chavez Street, Davao City. Call 2275602, 2263783 or 3018992.

Bits & Clips

Power Memory

WOULDN'T it be nice if all members of your family can engage in the one activity this summer? You can at Power Memory. Power Memory accepts enrollees practically of all ages—kids, high school and college students and professionals as well. Plus, Power Memory equips you and your children with a vital tool in school and at work, improved memorization skills. Courses/programs at Power Memory are well designed and tested. You and your children will never have a dull moment since memorization systems and techniques are imparted and mastered through games. Enroll now and take advantage of the summer savings promo. Avail yourself of 10 to 15-percent savings on course/program fees if you enroll on or before April 5 in any of the Power Memory Centers nationwide. For details, call 687-7070, 914-9090 or e-mail memorycoach@hotmail.com.

'Starbound Search For A Star'



ANNA Cathrina Lalin

METRO G Philippines, the school for voice and stage performance, and Cablelink, your link to world class entertainment, present "Starbound Search For A Star", a singing competition open to outstanding females with pleasing personality and singing prowess aged 16 to 22 years, and must be a current Cablelink subscriber of good standing. Exciting prizes are at stake. In line with this, Metro G Philippiues launches its Starbound image model and endorser Anna Cathrina Lalin, a graduating high school student from OB Montessori Las Pinas. Anna is the champion (senior division) of Popskwela 2003, an inter-school individual singing competition and Metro G and the Rotary Club's project. The Starbound finals will be held in May. For details, call Metro G at 541-0476 and look for Greys, Joyce or Queennie.

Seminar 'upgrades' personality

THE CORPORATE Mind Management Consultancy and Executive Training presents "Redefining Training", a personality and skills upgrading seminar-workshop for training professionals, on April 15 and 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Galleria Manila on Asian Development Bank Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. The 16-hour course is designed to develop above-average skills and a personality that has audience impact so as to achieve optimum training results. Seminar topics are "Achieving empathy with your audience", "Designing training programs", "Research approaches", "Delivering with impact", "Devising the appropriate training methodology", "Packaging the trainer's personality", "Optimal voice use" and "Training decorum". The workshop will cover training design, methodology and delivery. There will be voice development exercises and individual critique on personality packaging. Lecturers are Corporate Mind president and chief training consultant Joscephine Gomez and training consultants Gerry Romualdez, Carl Perion and lawyer Geronimo Sy. Call 687-7898.

RP strengths and weaknesses

MAPPING THE FUTURE

By Paul Dimond

IN DISCUSSING the strengths and weaknesses of the Philippines, I have no hesitation in maintaining for this audience focus on business competitiveness, as this must surely be a critical ingredient for the economic development of the Philippines and a driver of foreign policy.

Having scanned perhaps a couple of thousand newspapers in Manila over the last two years, I guess I cannot fairly claim to be a newcomer to the debate about competitiveness.

But while I represent a country that regards itself as a willing stakeholder in the Philippines, I do not claim any depth of academic analysis on Philippine competitiveness, as my personal experience in this country is still short and I certainly offer no expertise as an economist.

What I do recognize is that it is an important debate to have for the economic success of the Philippines.

What is clear from our own experience in the United Kingdom is that in the globalized world of footloose foreign direct investment and liberalizing trade any country does well to recognize its own strengths and weaknesses in business competitiveness.

President Macapagal- Arroyo noted in her State of the Nation address last July that the strength of the investment climate rested in great part on the realities of the global and regional environment and on how the Philippines turned those realities to your advantage. This has to be right.

Michael Porter's classic study on the competitive advantage of nations in 1990 remains a good guide to the principle of industrial clusters, since much debated but surely relevant.

As a friend of the Philippines, what advice could I offer?

Skilled Filipinos

First, the strengths of your resources. The greatest of these must be the talented skill set of the Filipino people, legendary from its recognition by Chinese traders in the pre-Spanish period and by British investors in the 19th Century: in 1858 the British already had seven commercial houses in Manila and the only European business presence in Iloilo, working in partnership with emerging Philippine business.

Here in the 21st century, most of our bilateral activity rests significantly on Philippine skills: in the development of your hydrocarbon resources into power, in our hospitals in the UK and in the merchant fleet. At the British Embassy, I am personally proud of a talented and creative team of Philippine staff working for the combined interests of the two countries.

Natural resources

You also have the natural resources. These are extensive, in energy, in minerals and in the massive potential for agricultural development, especially in Mindanao. The objectives of Philippine energy policy fit into your broader macro-economic objectives of economic growth, poverty alleviation and market-based industry.

You are already the world's second largest producer of geothermal energy, have the extraordinary indigenous natural gas development at Malampaya now on stream as a primary source for power demand in Luzon, converted by BG with their Philippine partners to power at Batangas after the extraction and processing at Malampaya by Shell with theirs.

You have plans for some important development of renewable energy sources. These strengths in the critical energy sector do of course demand some considerable investment. Your Energy Department assesses the requirement at P1.4 trillion over the next 10 years, nearly half required for grid development and much will have to come from overseas.

Match the skills

This is the clue to how I believe the Philippines should position itself to enhance your capacity. The story has to be of matching your skills and resources with international capital, in a continuing partnership to fulfill the potential of your comparative resource advantages, both human and natural.

When it comes to foreign direct investment, the city of London has some experience in investment flows. The reality is that international demand for such funds exceeds supply. Would-be recipients need to convince investors that their shareholders' funds can be competitively placed in a particular location or project. Without that, the funds will simply go elsewhere.

In Britain, our own success in attracting foreign direct investment over recent decades can be attributed to several key factors: a consistent welcome for such investment by the branches of government and by the trade unions; a business environment motivating employers; freedom for businessmen to get on with business, within the proper regulatory framework but with due acceptance of the sanctity of contracts; a liberal approach to the political economy; and of course good communications including the medium of English.

Right economic reforms

All these factors have been true in the Philippines too. Above all, businessmen look for the right economic reforms, including the elimination of corruption, and for continuity and assured implementation. And of course they look for a fair or better prospect for normalization over peace and order threats.

A particular strength of the Philippines is in outsourcing from elsewhere, rightly seen as a high priority for attracting investment that can employ significant numbers of knowledge workers.

Outsourcing

Outsource Philippines is an impressive example of a well-targeted campaign that highlights Philippine skills, especially English and ICT skills that need to be sharply honed to win against the competition. From the dispatching country's point of view the subject is not without controversy but the UK position is that investment, both outward and inward, is an inherent feature of a modern global economy.

British companies need to invest overseas to compete, grow and survive. It is not for my government to encourage our companies to relocate overseas. But we recognize that in the competitive, global trading environment outsourcing can be the key to survival. Like other investment outsourcing decisions can carry significant potential costs and risks and we are ready to help our firms minimize these.

We noted with interest the recent opening here in Makati of a new customer service center by the InterContinental Hotels Group of London. We are aware of other major British companies looking closely at the opening of a call center or business process outsourcing activity in the Philippines.

As businessmen, you will be well aware of the other sectors of industry where the Philippines continues to enjoy advantage, ranging from electronic components, motor car parts, aircraft servicing and of course the phenomenal large-scale pineapple and other agricultural production.

Medical tourism

All these still offer growth potential, through re-investment and skilful marketing. I note with interest the new priority sectors for the promotion of inward investment, including medical tourism. Much growth is likely to come from the businesses that are already here, including the small and medium-sized enterprises with specialist products and services.

I have been encouraged to see your shipyards on Cebu (from which last year the UK MoD took delivery of three vessels). There must be growth opportunities in mango marketing. My embassy is supporting the revival of the Hablon weaving sector in Miagao on Panay and the processing of seaweed by former MNLF members on Basilan. These may be small scale activities, but they are a part of the picture.

Let me turn to the key issue of foreign policy that affects us all, the continuing global threat of terrorism. The United Kingdom has strongly welcomed the stance of Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo over terrorism since her meeting with my Prime Min-

RP/ B2-4

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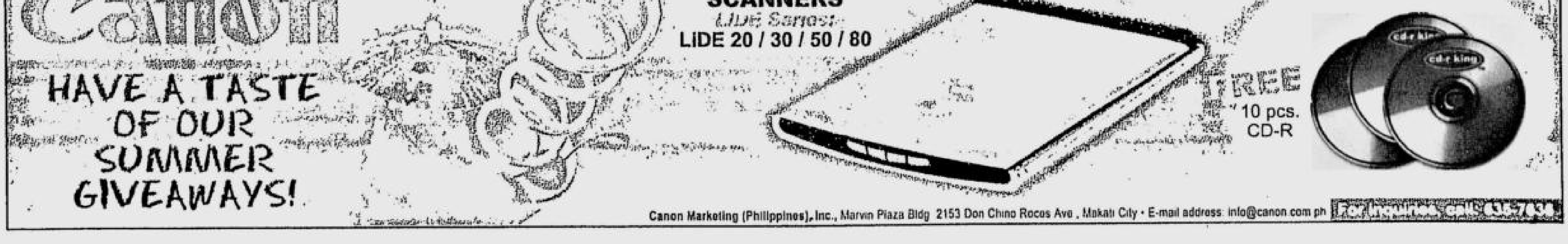
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How to get hold of artworks for investment

By Rico Hizon
Contributor

Conclusion

FOR this final part of investing in Philippine art, I take a look at where and how to get hold of these precious works. If you are a first time or novice collector this would give you an idea, on how the professional collectors do their art scouting.

Former Central Bank Governor Jaime Laya recently spoke of his strategy in acquiring the vast Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas art collection. His insights gave me and other collectors more valuable information on how he sourced the precious collection.

Learning about Philippine Art

Before you decide to invest in Philippine Art, and plunk in some of your previous savings, I would suggest that you, your family and maybe friends who share the same interest as you, visit some of our art monuments which house some really great art pieces. This will give you an educational tour of the different styles of art from different generations.

1. The Metropolitan Museum—Amorsolo, Manananansala and contemporary art
2. Manila City Hall—Works of. Francisco "Botong" Francisco
3. GSIS—home of Juan Luna's "La Parisienne" purchased at a Christie's auction.
4. Central Bank—magnificent collection of Manansala, Legaspi, Joya, Amorsolo, HR Ocampo, Luna etc. Unfortunately though they are not for public viewing. But if you have a friend in the Bangko Sentral I suggest you sneak in and have a look.
5. Lopez Museum—Hidalgo's, Luna's and Anita Magsaysay-Ho's.
6. Ayala Museum—rich with Amorsolo's and Luna's.
7. Vargas Museum—contemporary artworks
8. Ateneo Gallery—Fernando Zobel collection
9. De La Salle University Gallery—the collection of Doreen and Willi Fernandez

I would also suggest that you visit galleries in SM Megamall, Ayala Center and the Mabini area to give you a better feel of what style of art you prefer whether it be Impressionist, Expressionist, Abstract, Social Realism or other art forms.

Just don't buy art because your friends are buying or investing or because it's the in thing. Buy art because you love it and appreciate the work of art.

Sources for Artworks

Galleries, distressed financial institutions or companies, old private collections, family heirlooms, friends, dealers and agents, artists and their families and gifts.

Acquisition strategy

Education is still the key to investing in the arts. The first step of prospective buyers is to hit the books and gain a basic understanding of what makes an artwork valuable. Composition and provenance are key in determining the overall value of a piece.

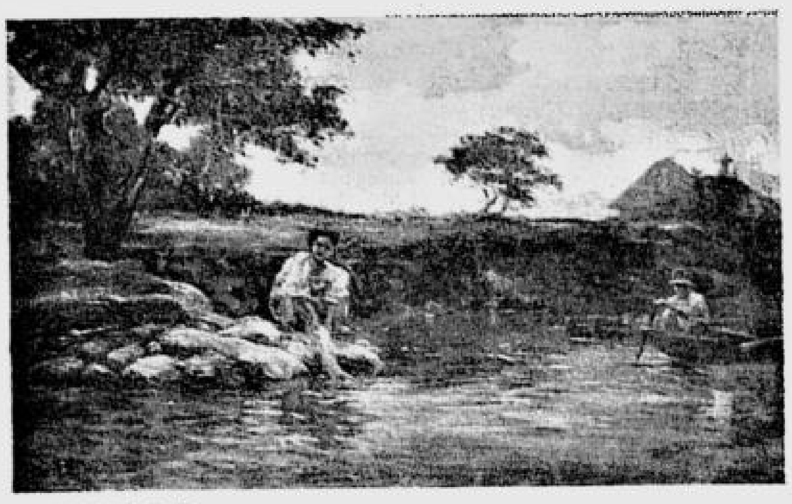
Secondly, the artwork must be of utmost quality and authenticated by an art specialist.

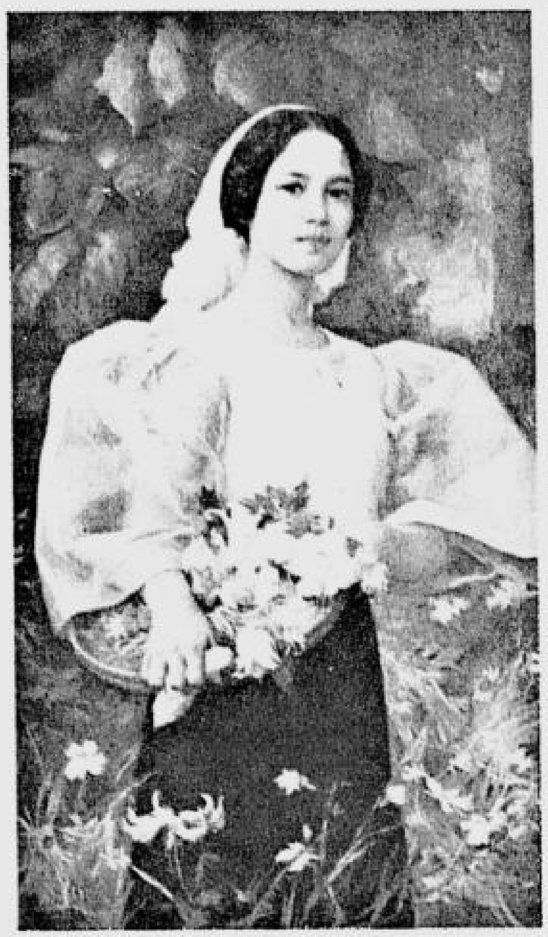
Thirdly, the piece should be of importance.

Fourth, buy the recognized masters and contemporary painters.

Fifth, the size of the painting must have space in your home and finally you must be able to afford the price.

Potential art investors must also approach several reputable art galleries before making their purchases. It is important to talk to several because art is their business. Talking to at least three or four would allow you to have a clearer picture of the current hot picks and the prevailing rates.


FABIAN de la Rosa


FERNANDO Amorsolo

Artists in demand

For new investors with a sizable amount of disposable income, blue-chip artists are still the best bets. These are the established names such as National Artists whose artworks have a following. According to dealers and collectors, the most sought after works are from Juan Luna, Resurrecion Hidalgo, Fabian de la Rosa, Fernando Amorsolo, Vicente Manansala, Carlos "Botong" Francisco, Jose Joya, Anita Magsaysay-Ho and Ang Kiukok among others. Most of their works are so scarce that collectors scramble for their paintings during the Sotheby's and Christie's auctions.

Second generation artists

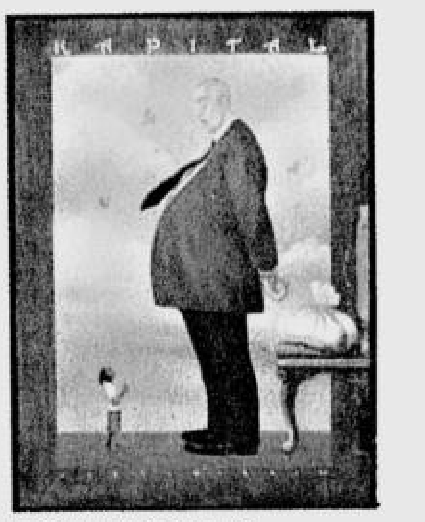
For those who do not have as much financial capabilities, second-generation artists also have value. These are artists whose artistry is already recognized though their stature, although not yet at par with the masters.

Some young collectors say there is a treasure trove of young and established artists who have made a name for themselves in the Philippine art scene and galleries in key art capitals around the world including New York, London, Singapore, Hong Kong and Paris. And they will in time be the future masters.

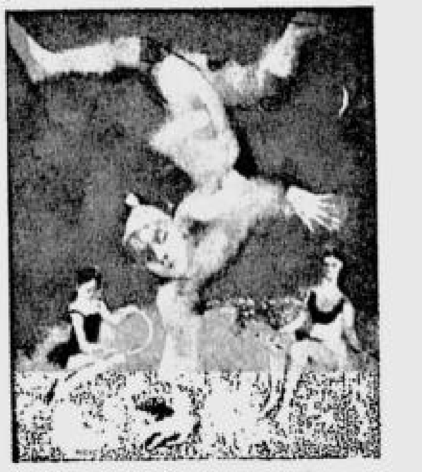
Among the names collectors collect are the likes of Marcel Antonio, Mark Justiniani, Elmer Borlongan, Manny Garibay, Ronald Ventura, Gus Albor and Ramon Orlina.

For gamblers, however, new artists may prove to be interesting. Doing so, however, requires an exceptional eye for recognizing talent. For those with the gift, the returns are immense since a piece purchased for P5,000 can eventually yield millions.

The most important advice, however, is to never hesitate to ask questions. The more data one can gather about an artwork, the more informed the decision would be made on whether to purchase or not.



JUSTINIANO Kapital


MARCELO Antonio's Acrobat

RP strengths and weaknesses

From page B2-3

ister in London. We continue to welcome unwavering Philippine support in our common effort to eliminate terrorism across the world.

The tragic events in Madrid illustrate more than ever the need to work closely with all our partners. It is a sad but important reflection of our era that in the words of my Foreign Secretary nobody can opt out of the war against terrorism.

Otherwise on foreign policy issues, the Philippines already well recognizes the key realities of opportunity in East Asia, the place of Europe as a source of FDI alongside your other partners and the crucial role of Filipinos overseas.

We have ourselves recently redefined UK strategic international policy priorities: a safer world, the rule of law, an open and expanding global economy, sustainable development, energy security. These all resonate here.

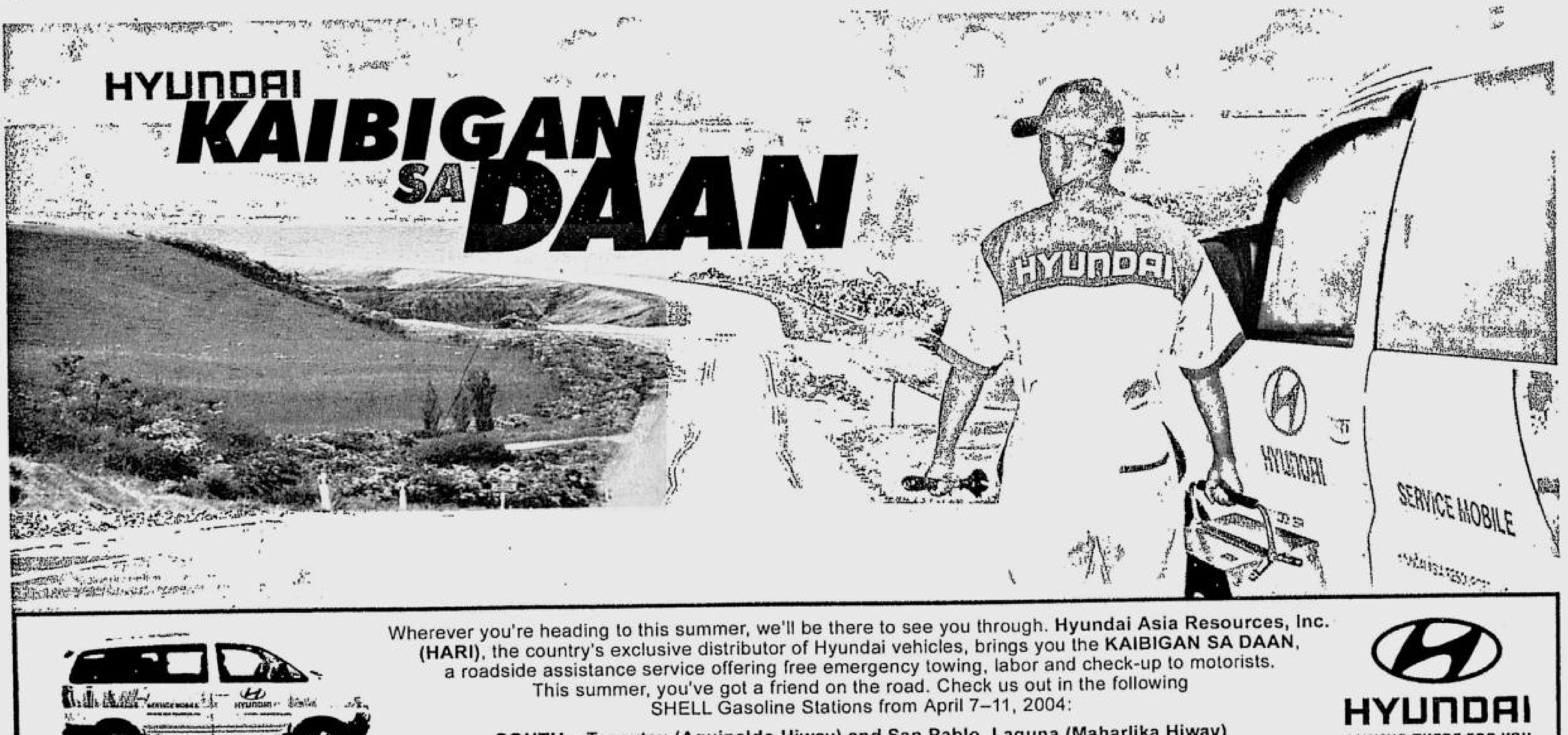
In this context, allow me a word about our travel advice. This is designed to help British travellers and British citizens overseas make informed decisions about their travel, against the known risks. We issue such advice for all countries. Let me be clear that it is rare for my government to warn British citizens against travelling to a country. We do not do so in the case of the Philippines.

Our website on this subject is clear on what our advice is and I urge anyone interested to look at it closely. I comment only that I will not add or detract from the language on the website but also reassure you that the content is regularly updated and amended as appropriate. Our hope is that the incidence of peace and order problems and terrorist activity will decline sharply. This would of course be reflected in our advice.

Finally, allow me a word about confidence. All countries including my own gain from candid self-awareness and a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses.

As a friend of the Philippines proud to represent my country here, I encourage your media to look also at the strengths, tell the good news stories, assist in boosting consumer confidence, such a critical ingredient in the expansion of the domestic economy, and continue to support Team Philippines.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author, the UK Ambassador to the Philippines, and does not necessarily reflect the view of Her Majesty's Government nor the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. This was the speech delivered by the author during the MAP general membership meeting. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)



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ENTERTAINMENT

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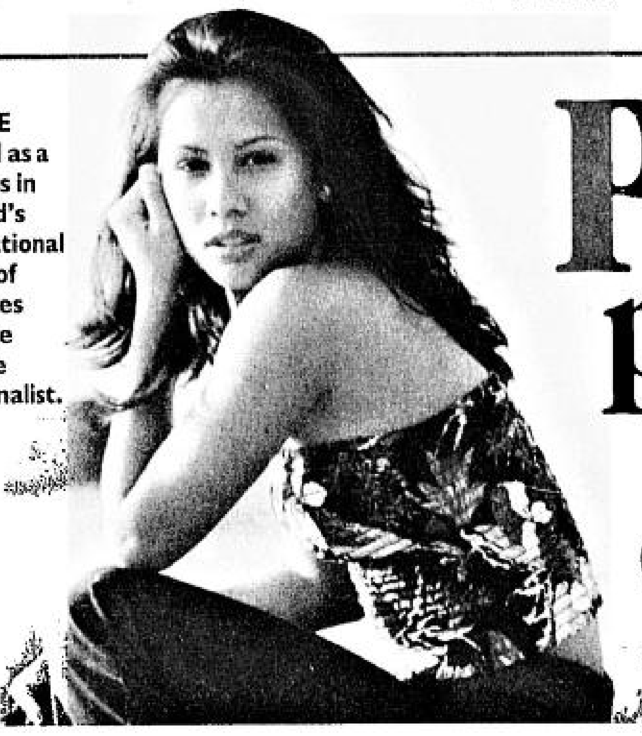
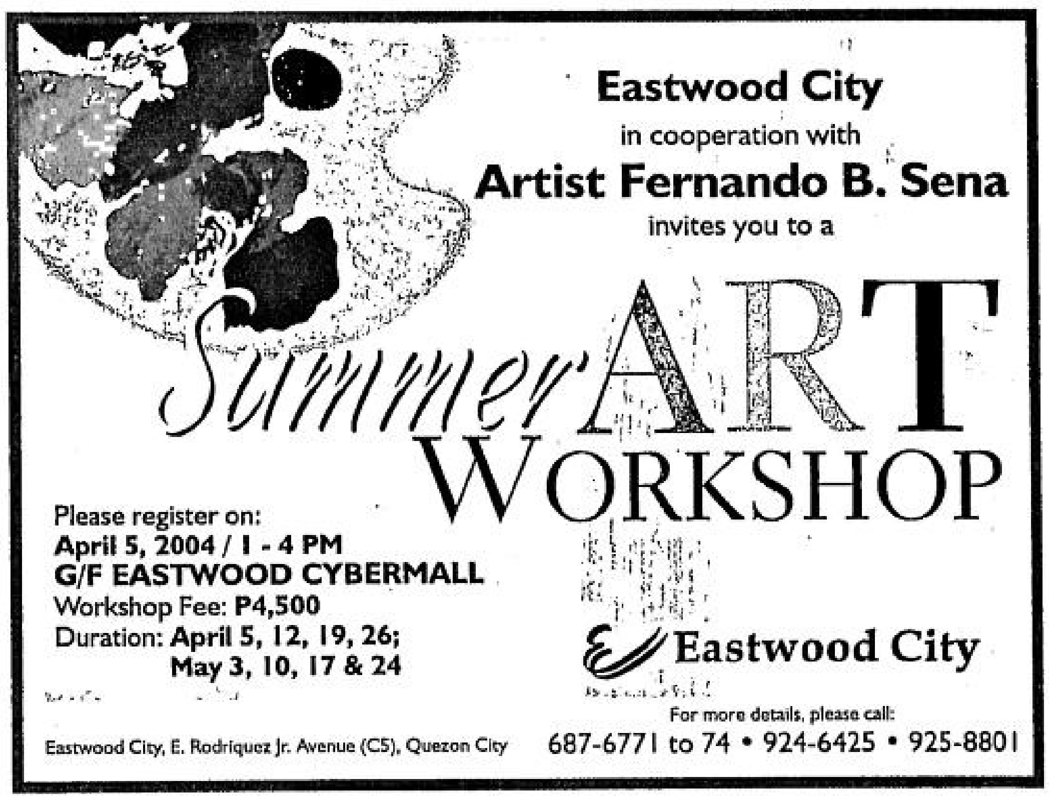


CAMILE worked as a waitress in stepdad's International House of Pancakes until she became an AI finalist.

Pinay power rocks 'Idol'



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Jasmine Trias and Camile Velasco in top 10

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
LA Correspondent

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

LOS ANGELES—Power to the flower! Jasmania! Camile rocks! Hawaii's pride!

These are just some of the slogans on posters that young and old fans of Filipino-American teeners Jasmine Trias, 17, and Camile Velasco, 18, are screaming out.

The two girls have survived the unpredictable voting pattern of the top rated talent show, "American Idol." A record 20 million votes were cast in round three to decide who stays in the competition and who gets booted out.

Pink-haired Amy Adams, who sang "Dancing in the Street," was the one who got kicked out of the competition last Wednesday. Adams landed in the lowest spot of the Bottom Three (contestants who got the least number of votes from the viewers). Jennifer Hudson and LaToya London were the two other contestants at the bottom. The two were both asked to go back and join the others to complete the magic nine.

"I am so happy for Camile," Dr. James West, Camile's stepdad, said in an exclusive phone interview with Inquirer. "She was so excited, pleased and very grateful to all the viewers who voted for her and supported her all these weeks."

Humble girl

For the first time, all the contestants and their families had dinner together. Dr West said, "It was so nice to get to know the other contestants and their families since we are all in the same boat, sharing the same pressures and situations. There was camaraderie in the group. I wish they did that earlier."

West, who has a doctorate degree in communications, owns an IHOP (International House of Pancakes) restaurant in Hawaii, where Camile used to work as a waitress until she became an AI finalist.

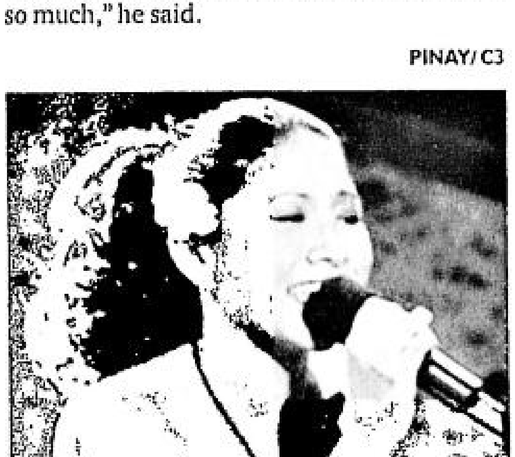
"I will be here in LA for as long as she stays in the competition," he said. "I am staying right now in a condominium so I can be close to her. I pick her up and have dinner with her whenever her hectic schedule permits. I watch her every Tuesday and Wednesday.

"People like Camile because she is polite to the judges. She doesn't answer back. She is a humble Filipina girl."

West said Camile got her love for singing from her mother, Rennie Roque-West. Rennie was a former screenwriter for Viva Films before she immigrated to the US, he said. The couple met at a Maui Writers' Conference and ended up working on a screenplay together.

He said Camile's 7-year-old sister Divina also loves to sing. "She idolizes her older sister so much," he said.

PINAY/C3



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Lea, Joe Mari in Jesuit album

SHOW TIME

LEA Salonga is one of the featured artists in "No Mas Amor Que El Tu Yo/We Are Yours (Sacred Heart)," the album from the Jesuit Music Ministry of the Jesuit Communications Foundation Inc. (JesCom).

The album is in response to the call of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to pray for the sanctification of priests and the renewal of Christian life through the fervent observance of nine First Fridays by praying to the Sacred Heart of Jesus from November 2003 to November 2004.

"No Mas Amor Que El Tu Yo" is a traditional Sacred Heart song dedicating the Filipino nation to the Heart of Jesus. The song was translated from Spanish to Filipino by a team of Filipino Jesuits.

Salonga sings "We Are Yours," composed by Noel Miranda. It was originally recorded for the pop-inspirational album "Let Your Praises be Heard" by Bukas Palad.

Also performing in the album are Jesuit Music Ministry artists Bukas Palad, Hangad and Noel Cabangon, together with Jose Mari Chan.

The Sacred Heart CD is available at the Jesuit Communications-Jesuit Music Ministry kiosk on the 5th level of SM Megamall and on the lower ground floor of SM North Edsa.

For more information, call JesCom at 426-5971 or 72, e-mail jcf@admu.edu.ph, or visit www.ignaciana.org/jescom.

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TIMES	SPY: LEGEND OF SPOTCOLE

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ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
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CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
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CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	PASSION OF THE CHRIST
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CINEMA-14	HOUSE OF THE DEAD
CINEMA-15	50 FIRST DATES

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

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CINEMA-4	[illegible]

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THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST PG13 11:20, 2.00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST PG13 1:00, 3:40, 6.20, 9:00	THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST PG13 12:30, 3:10

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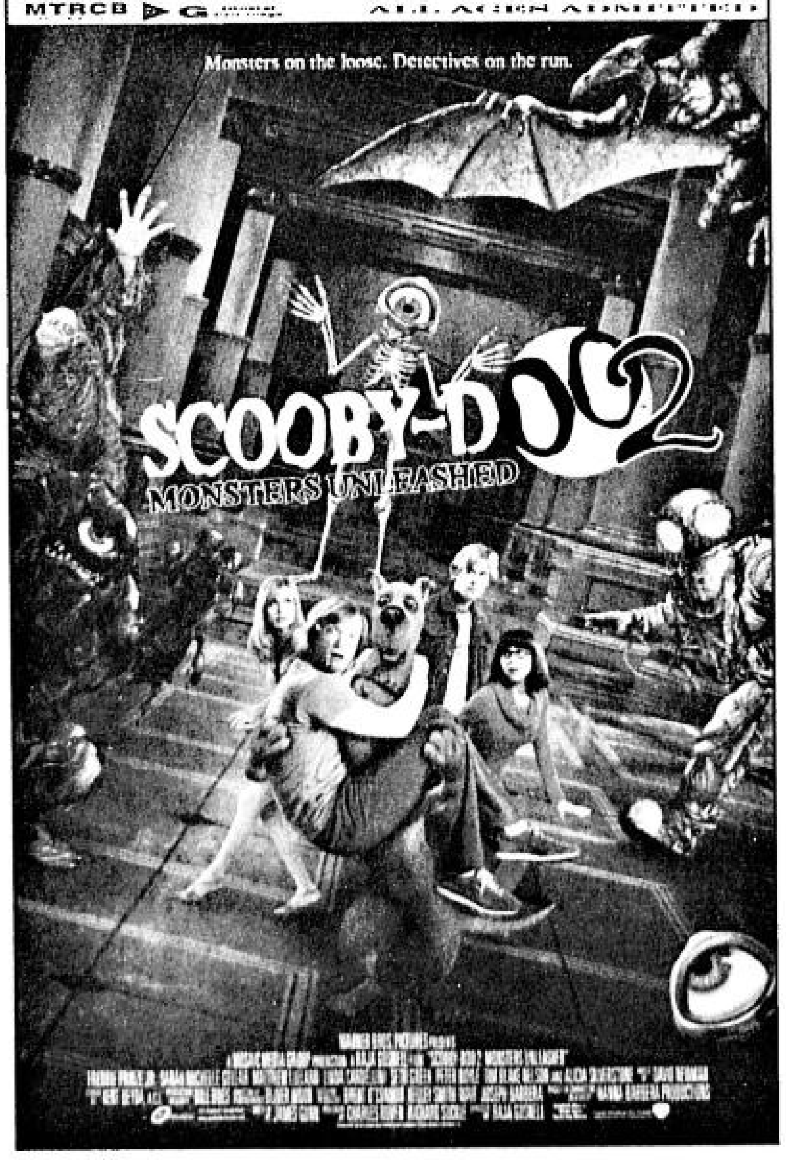
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3 SCOOBY DOO 2 10 50, 1 50, 3 10, 5:20, 7 30, 9:40

4 50 FIRST DATES 11 10, 1 20 [illegible] 5 40, 7 50, 10 00

5 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10 50, 1 30, 4 10, 6 50, 9 30

6 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 12 30, 3 20, 6 10, 9 00

7 PETER PAN Sneak Preview

8 LOVE ACTUALLY 10 40, 1 25, 4 10, 6 55, 9 40

9 HOUSE OF THE DEAD 10 50, 1 00, [illegible] 10, 6 20 [illegible]

10 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT 11 50 [illegible]

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2 SCOOBY DOO 2 10 15, 12 10, 2 05, 4 00, 5 55, 7 50, 9 50

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4 HOUSE OF THE DEAD [illegible]

5 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10 30, 1 10, 3 50, 6 30, 9 20

6 50 FIRST DATES 10 50 [illegible]

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST [illegible]

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1 HOUSE OF THE DEAD 11 50, 2 10, 4.30, 6 50, 9 10

2 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10 15, 1 20, 4 25, 7 3[illegible] 10 30

3 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10 15, 1 20, 4 25, 7 30, 10 30

4 50 FIRST DATES 10 50, 12 50, 2 50, 4 50, 6 50, 9 0[illegible]

5 SCOOBY DOO 2 10 50 [illegible]

6 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10 15, 1 50, 4 55, 8 00

7 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10 1[illegible] 1 50, 4 55, 8 00

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2 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 10.10, 12 5[illegible] 30 [illegible] 8 50

3 HOUSE OF THE DEAD 12 00, 2 00, 4 00, 6 00, 8 00

4 THE GRUDGE 2 12 00, 2 00, 4 00, 6 00, 8 00

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST [illegible] 4 50, 7

6 SCOOBY DOO 2 11 25, 1 15, 3 05, 4 55, 6 45, 8.35

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Borgy Manotoc as sitcom actor

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IS BORGY Manotoc considering becoming an actor? If so, how well would he do in that line of work and creativity? Last Monday night at 10 p.m., we tuned in to Channel 2's "Ok Fine, Whatever" to find out.

Borgy was a guest star on **Aga Muhlach**'s sitcom, in an episode that cast him as the human incarnation of a *siokoy* played by midget comedian **Dagul**.

Whenever a couch shell was sounded, Dagul morphed into Borgy, whose manly charms beguiled a number of women, including a sexy resort employee played by **Andrea del Rosario**—who turned out to be a mermaid also masquerading as a human.

What were mermaids and *siokoys* doing in Aga's sitcom? It turns out that Aga and the gang were vacationing at a beach resort, and thus got to interact with the sea creatures, who were for their part bent on living in the human world.

Other mermaids were comically portrayed by pint-sized charmers **Mahal** and **Mura**.

The episode held together better than some other comedy shows, because its script told a clear and focused story and didn't go into the distracting comic detours that frequently characterize local sitcoms.

Also, the members of the cast came up with agreeably zany performances that kept the plot developing briskly—although there came a time when things got to be repetitious, as both Borgy and Andrea's characters kept morphing in and out of their sea creature and human manifestations, to the point of tedium.

The inclusion of the sea creatures was also a welcome touch, since it was a novel departure from usual guest appearances, while comically spoofing the mermaid ethos made popular once more by Channel 2's newer soap, "Marina."

What about Borgy's performance? Well, his hunky look was attention-calling, and his acting revealed an impish comic quality that was refreshing.

On point of real characterization, however, he didn't do much.

If he eventually decides to give acting a more determined go, could Borgy do well as a TV-film performer?

He has to work a lot more on his Tagalog, that's for sure, and he should realize that thespic competence can't be arrived at halfheartedly.

To become a competent thespian, Borgy needs to take a rigorous acting workshop that will definitively establish his strengths and weaknesses as a performer, and show him the extent of the emotional commitment that actors have to make.

Good looks and a great body are plus factors, but they have to be bolstered by training, performing skills, sensitivity, versatility, a "giving" attitude and long-term commitment. Otherwise, the new actor's career could be dishearteningly short-lived.

Another factor Borgy has going for him is the fact that he has the right thespic genes: his mother, **Imee Marcos**, was a good stage actress in the '70s.

But Borgy has to build on that with his own creativity, hard work and determination. In the thespic arts, there are no shortcuts.

Prime Council

TUESDAYS at Fiesta San Miguel at Dusit Hotel Nikko in Makati, the entertainment is provided by the Prime Council band, fronted by soloists **Jed Maddela** and **Gail Blanco**.

Jed won second place in the Voice of Asia competition in Kazakhstan, and has cut an album, "I'll Be Around" for Universal Records. Gail's album, for EMI-Polyeast, is titled "Utos ng Puso."

Other performers at Fiesta San Miguel: Monday, Route 70; Wednesday, Moonstrucks; Thursday, **Pido** and Take One with Retrospect; Friday, George and Route 70; Saturday, **Rowena Michaels** and **Ronnie Diao** with the Parliament Syndicate. Call 867-3333, ext. 3308.

Musical theater workshops

GANTIMPALA Theater Foundation will hold musical theater workshops from April 14 to May 29 at Rizal Park's Concert at the Park Auditorium.

Children's Musical Theater will be taught by **Sheila Lopez**, while **Roeder Camañag** handles Musical Theater for teens and adults. Call 536-5860.

BORGY Manotoc: Human incarnation of a 'siokoy'

'Hi-5'

LAST April 1, Nickelodeon launched "Hi-5," the hit preschool entertainment series that focuses on music, dance, learning and fun.

The show's five talented cast members are joined by their puppet friends. Together, they take young viewers on an entertaining voyage of discovery, language exploration, music, social skills and visual concepts. "Hi-5" is telecast Monday to Friday at 8:30 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Pinay power rocks 'Idol'

From page C1

The top 10 finalists, including Camile and Jasmine, will go on a 40-city tour of the US after the competition, according to West.

He said "we are planning to bring Camile to the Philippines" after the tour.

Win-win situation

Camile, who goes by the nickname Koy, was born in Makati and now lives in Haiku, Maui. It won't be her first time in the Philippines since she left, according to West. She has been home once or twice before, he said. But for West, the trip to the Philippines will be his first visit to the country.

"Whatever happens, it will be a win-win situation for Camile because she is already getting offers to endorse cosmetic and hair products, to do modeling, and to start a clothing line," said West. "Her exposure in 'American Idol' has definitely opened doors for her."

Camile, who sang "For Once in My Life" on their Motown-themed show, which also featured guest judges Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson ("Ain't No Mountain High Enough") and the Funk Brothers Band, received mixed reactions from the judges.

Judge Randy Jackson said she was "rough and pitchy for me." But Paula Abdul countered that Randy should clean out his ears because that was Camile's "best performance." Guest judge Valerie Simpson said "it was great," but Simon Cowell said it was just "average."

'Effortless, beautiful'

Jasmine Trias, who sang "You're All I Need to Get By," got kudos from most of the judges except Jackson who said "it was great but your last note was pitchy." Abdul commented that "you were in control, effortless and beautiful." Guest judge Ashford said, "Having written the song, I would say it was a great rendition." And the usually acerbic Cowell said "you have brought back what we love about you."

Lesley Mapa of LA, Jasmine's cousin, was at the studio to support her. Mapa, wearing a yellow flower in her hair and dressed in a black T-shirt with Jasmine's face printed on it, arrived at the studio with Edna Santos, Jasmine's aunt, and Jasmine's friends Kristina Book, 16, and her dad, Erik, from Buena Park.

"This is the first time we watched her in the live show and we are so proud of her," remarked Mapa.

Serious competition

Music critics agree with the voters' choice.

Calgarysun.com's music critic Mike Bell said, "Jasmine's back. And on top." Anika Van Wyk, Showbiz editor, noted, "Fantasia (Barrino) has some serious competition from the Hawaiian beauty Jasmine." While Page 6 columnist, Chris Gerritsen, said, "Though Fantasia has been most consistent during the competition, she was most inconsistent last night. Looks like Jasmine takes the lead with yet another energetic performance."

Music critic Ellie Blalock of Silver Chips Online wrote, "Jasmine was 10 times better this week than last. Her song showed off the power of Jasmine's rich, intriguing voice. Jasmine has a big fan base that will stick by her for this week at the very least."

A record 25.7 million viewers watched the Tuesday airing of "American Idol."

DIVINA, Camile, Dr. West and Mrs. Rennie Roque-West

April shower at Dish

SHOW TIME

AN ENDLESS April shower of refreshing live music falls at Dish at Power Plant Rockwell in Makati City.

Mondays at Dish are acoustic nights, with Pido and Jen performing on April 5 and 19. U-Turn takes its turn on April 12 and 26.

Tuesdays are retro nights, with Rockin' Revival. April 6 will see a showdown between the veteran band and the relative newcomer the Akafellas.

Wednesdays are a delightful mix, with Jimmy Bondoc on April 7 and 28, and Nina and her brother King on April 21.

The new Dimsum Band takes Thursdays, with their Dish debut on April 22 and 29. Mr. Acoustic Paolo Santos performs on April 15.

Soul singer Rebekah makes her Dish debut on Fridays, with a show April 23 and April 30. The K24/7 rocks Dish on April 16, 23 and 30.

Another Dish first-timer, Thor, with Next Level, performs Saturdays, April 10, 17 and 24. The hip hop group Shots of Wisdom join him on April 17 and 24.

Dish is on the 3rd level of the Power Plant Mall at the Rockwell Center in Makati City.

A satellite Dish will also open this April at the ABS-CBN compound in Quezon City, with the Akafellas performing on April 20 and 27, and Adjundie on April 13.

"The Uninvited"

Scariest movie of the year.

Jeon Ji-hyun of *"My Sassy Girl"* stars in the horror movie *"UNINVITED."*

The Story:

J. Won, an interior decorator, is overcome with inexplicable anxiety as his long-overdue wedding with Hee-Eun approaches.One evening, J. Won falls asleep on the subway on his way home. He is barely able to wake up at the last station. As he comes round he sees two young girls asleep on the seat next to him. He can't wake them before he has to jump off as train leaves the station. He arrives home to find that his wife-to-be has bought them a new dining table.

The next day, J. Won is working when he hears on the radio that two young girls were found poisoned on the subway. In the course of fitting some lights in a ceiling he is hit by falling debris and cuts his forehead. After a trip to the hospital for some stitches, he goes home to find the two dead girls sat at his new dining table.

J. Won, who is now working on renovating a psychiatrist's office, bumps into Yun, a patient on her way out of a therapy session. Yun has been receiving treatment after she witnessed a woman who murdered her own children a year earlier. Another accident leads to J. Won taking Yun back to his apartment where she too sees the apparition of the dead children in the dining room.

Having been tormented by nightmares and the hallucinations, J. Won is desperate to find out something about the apparitions that haunt him. Yun runs away refusing to help him, so he searches through the patients' records at the clinic to find out more about her. Using the information he succeeds in persuading her to help him and she tells him things about events in his past he had tried to forget.

In the final scene J. Won's sits in his dust covered apartment. Face lined like an old man, he brings a steaming dish of food to the dining table and sits down.

His dining table is full, not with the family he had been planning but the apparitions of the two poisoned girls on the subway and Yun who is now dead.

The film grossed over US$ 30m in just 14 days in Korea. And had audiences screaming in their seats from beginning to end.

Asian movies are getting a lot of respect from Hollywood these days The High levels of creativity combined with good production values have catapulted film like The Uninvited onto the international stage. New Line Cinema are in talks with the Korean producers to do a remake in Hollywood starring Orlando Bloom.

Asian movies are getting a lot of respect these days from Hollywood.

This new Korean ghost story **THE UNINVITED** features the long-awaited return of superstar Jeon Ji-hyun of "My Sassy Girl".

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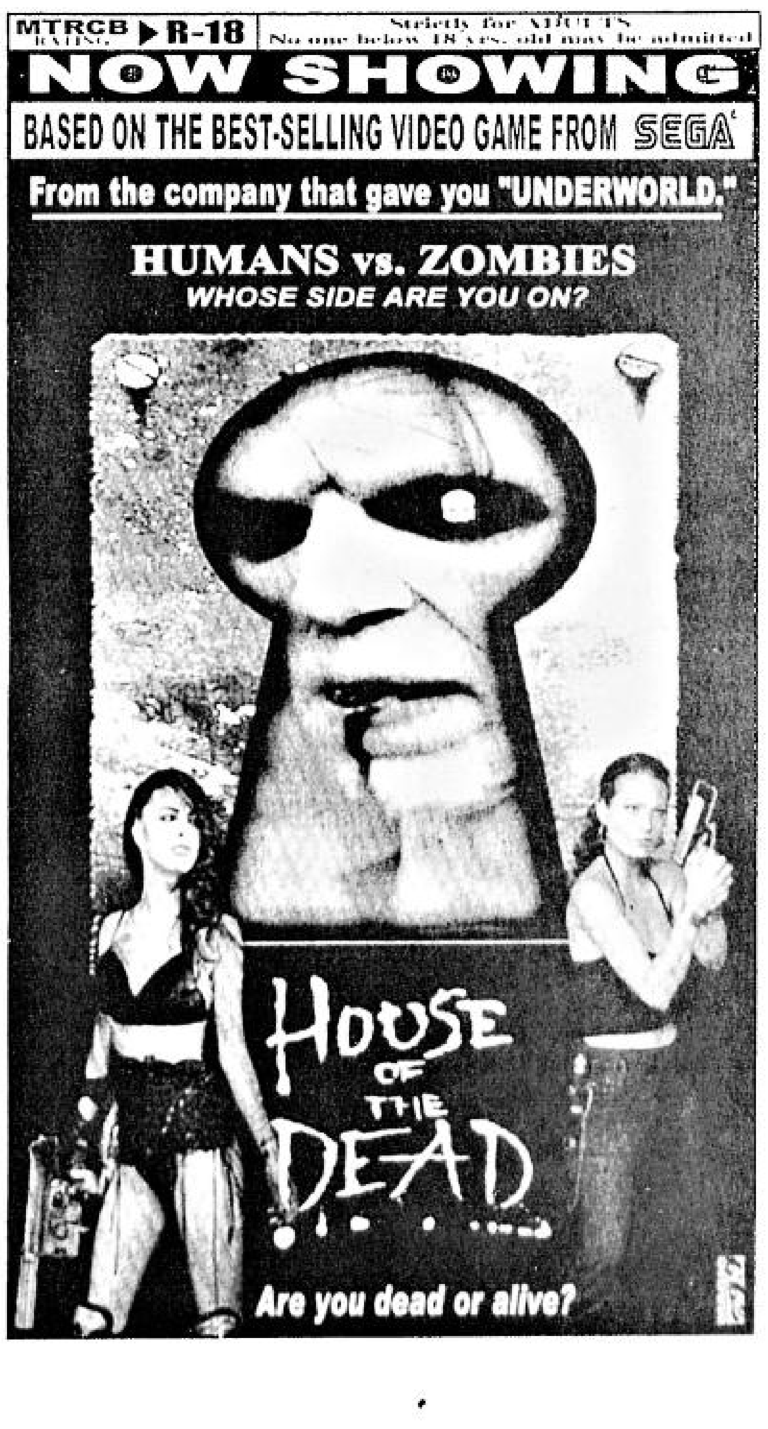
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'THE LARAMIE PROJECT'

Hope and hate

One young man's murder uncovers truths about homophobia, intolerance and prejudice

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

A PASSERBY had found college student Matthew Shepard bloodied and tied to a fence in Laramie, Wyoming, in October 1998. Two men had lured Shepard, abducted him, then bludgeoned him and left him for dead. He died six days later.

Shepard was gay. He suffered a gruesome, shocking fate because of the fact that he was gay. His death sparked a collective outcry that made the quiet town of Laramie the center of media attention and public scrutiny.

Shepard's death made headlines and outraged gay communities everywhere. In massive demonstrations, the gay communities rallied for swift action against the pair who admitted to the hate crime.

The Matthew Shepard incident unearthed many truths about homophobia in America, and particularly the place where the openly gay man was killed.

Tolerance

Playwright Moses Kaufman and a handful of members from his Tectonic Theater Project conducted more than 200 interviews with Laramie residents about the crime. This information-gathering was for a new play that focused on the reactions and opinions of various townsfolk on matters of sexuality and tolerance.

"The Laramie Project" the play debuted in New York in May 2000. Six months later, it was performed in Laramie itself.

The HBO movie adaptation is based on that play and is finally showing in Asia after its initial American airing in 2002. It has an all-star cast playing residents with really interesting things to say about the matter. Steve Buscemi, Laura Linney, Joshua Jackson, Peter Fonda, Christina Ricci, Camryn Manheim, Janeane Garofalo, Clea Duvall and Jeremy Davies appear as people affected by the horrid event.

Beyond borders

Sympathy for Shepard comes from the most unexpected of places, as does repulsive prejudice. Some residents speculate, while others state facts about the victim, his tormentors, and the irrevocably shaken community.

The celebrated case had attracted its share of unwelcome attention back then, and it is reenacted in the HBO movie, too: A group of redneck protesters, armed with placards that say "Fags burn in hell," "AIDS cures fags," and "Matthews is in hell" demonstrated outside Shepard's wake and the Wyoming courthouse where the killers were tried.

"The Laramie Project" the TV movie looks at the bigger picture while focusing less on Shepard's life. In piecing together a number of people's views of the slain young man, it paints a complicated image of how he was a catalyst for communication and debate.

Ultimately, we know less of Matthew Shepard but more of the issues of gay rights and the fight against ignorance—both issues transcending the borders of Laramie.

The movie stands alone well enough, although watching "The Matthew Shepard Story," another made-for-TV movie that occasionally airs on HBO, can complement "The Laramie Project." That other movie focuses on the victim, warts and all. It answers questions that "The Laramie Project" may pose. It details pivotal points in his life, from his acceptance of his true nature to his parents' difficult decision to ask for leniency instead of the death penalty for the perpetrator who actually committed the violence.

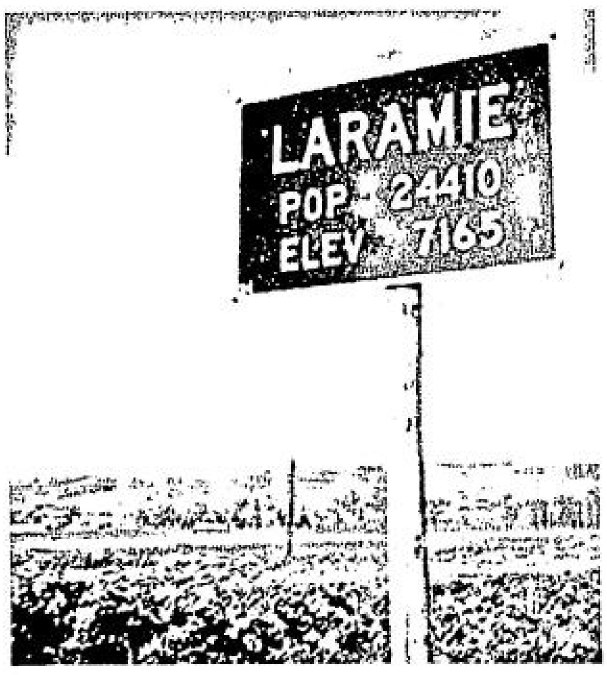
Lessons to be learned

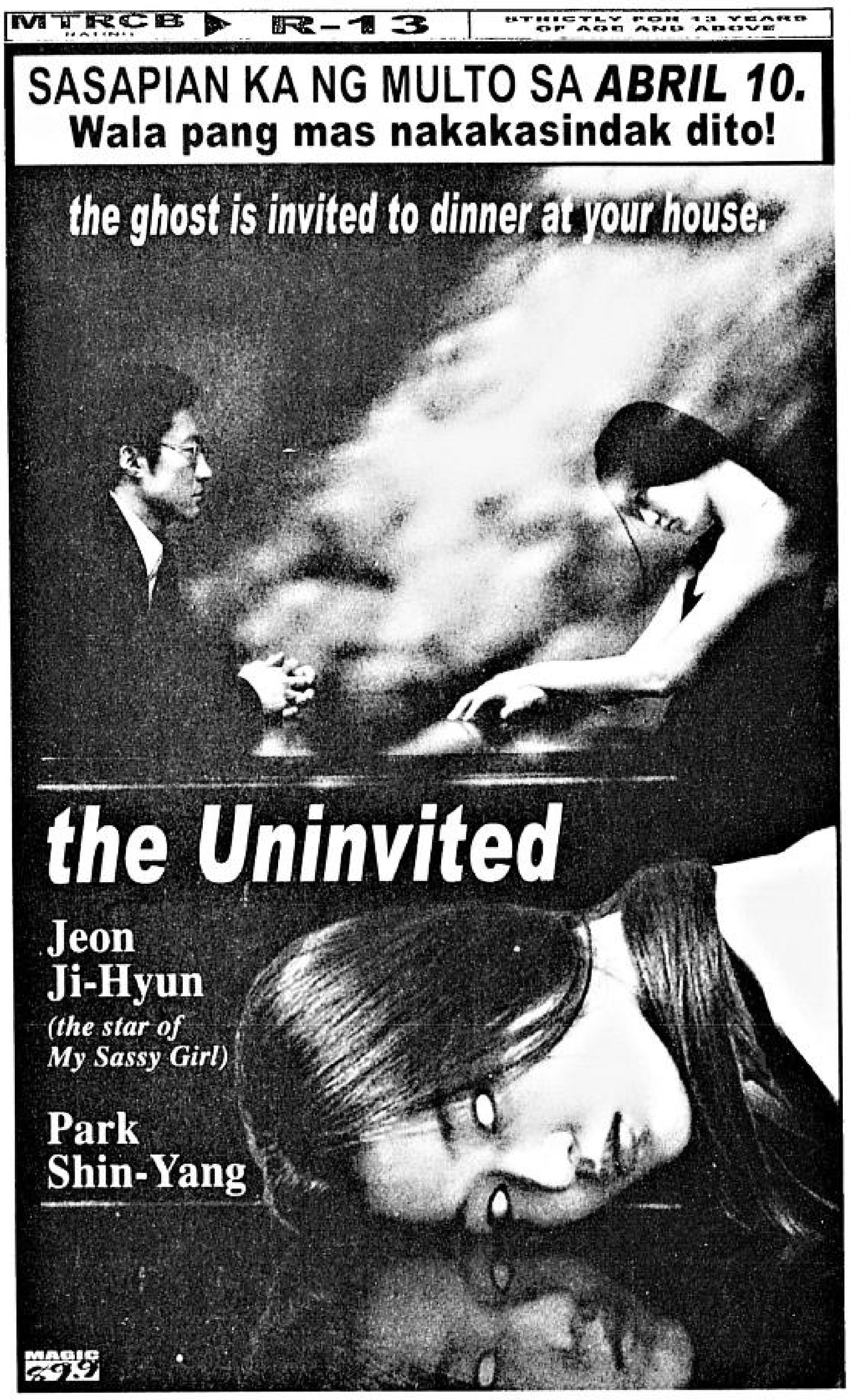
Whether you're gay or are related to one by blood, friendship, or love —in this day and age, one would be hard-pressed to find anyone who isn't—you should know and learn from the lessons of the stories of Matthew Shepard, Tina Brandon ("Boys Don't Cry"), and lesser-known hate crime victims.

Why these crimes happen at all in these so-called civilized times is still a head-shaking mystery.

"The Laramie Project" is enlightening. It reflects the sad reality of certain people's moronic arrogance, hypocrisy and simple-mindedness. But it also tempered by hope, represented by individuals who are accepting of others regardless of their lifestyle choices.

"The Laramie Project" premieres on April 6 at 8:30 p.m. over HBO, with subsequent airings on April 7 (4:45 a.m.), April 11 (9:25 p.m.), April 16 (12:45 a.m.), April 19 (4 p.m.), and April 24 (9:45 a.m.).

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the Uninvited

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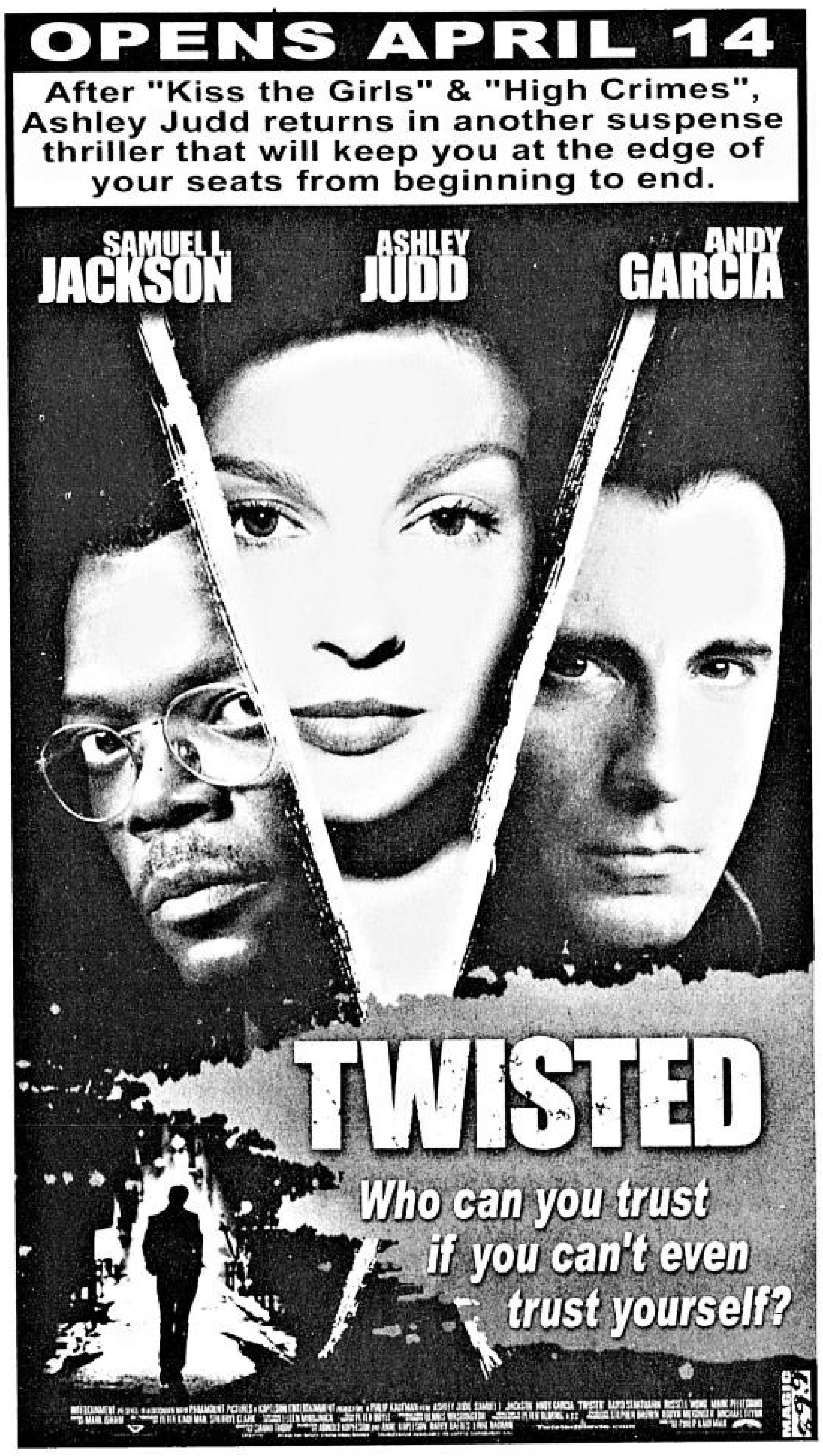
(the star of My Sassy Girl)
Park Shin-Yang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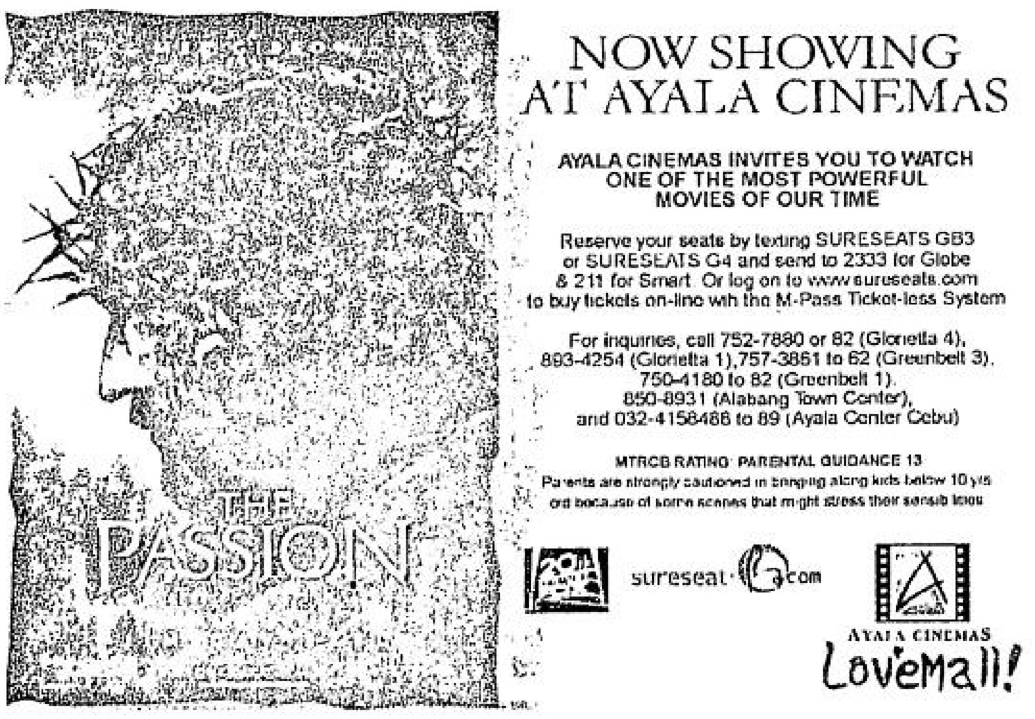
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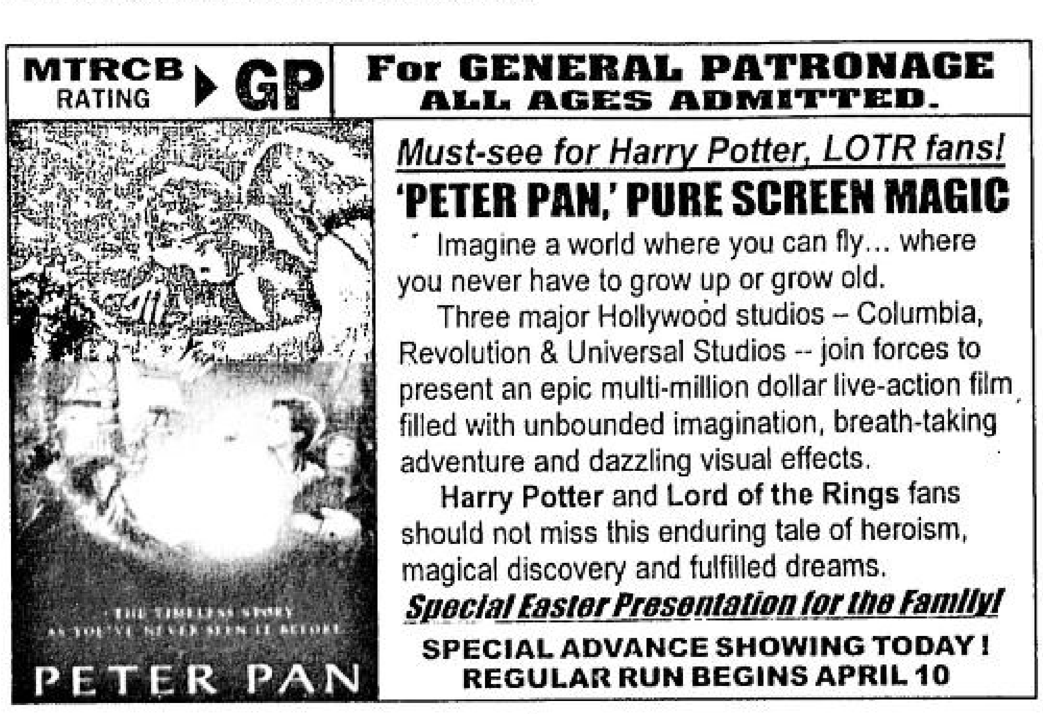
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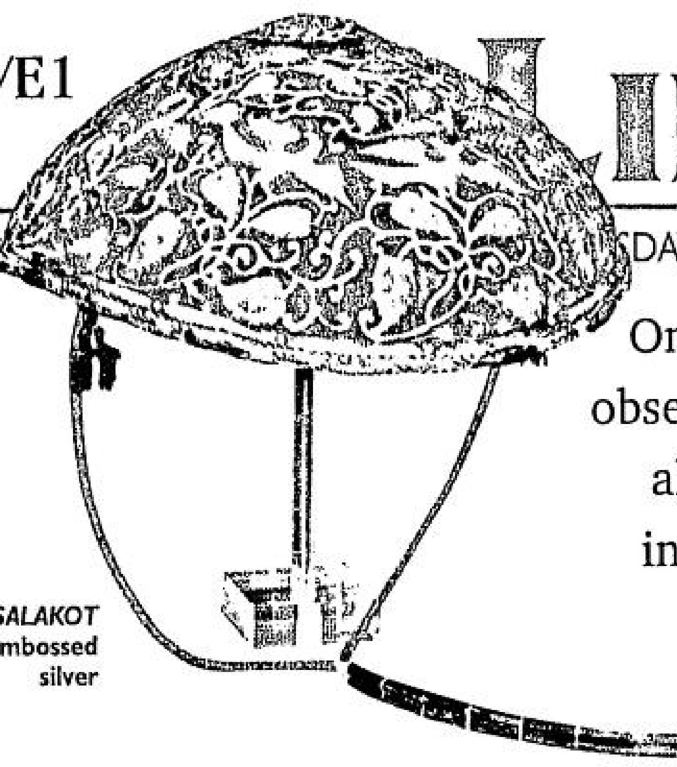
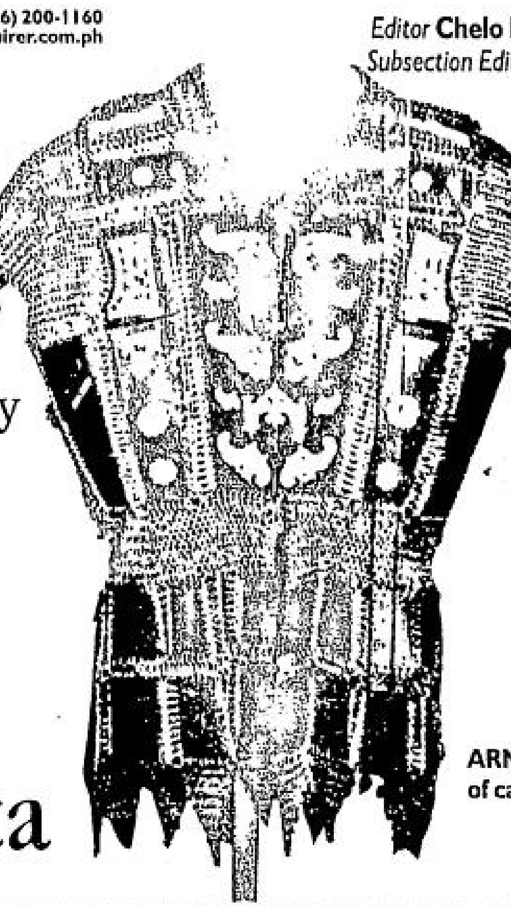
Neil Daza's lens of faith /E1



SALAKOT with embossed silver

One may say that this exhibit is about obsessions and oppressions. But one may also say that it is about insights and inventions—the colonial experience in which both sides learn a lot from each other



ARMOR made of carabao horn

Filipinas and the romance of the conquista

ALL4ART

Bea Zobel Jr.

MY FATHER and I first went to see the Legazpi exhibit with Jak Pilar as our guide. I couldn't get enough so I went again. This time John Silva took me around. John's excitement was contagious. We were both shrieking with excitement. I was like a schoolchild discovering and marveling at the many examples of Filipino ingenuity that had been preserved in Spain.

The Legazpi exhibit which was brought over from San Sebastian, Spain (birthplace of Legazpi) to mark the fifth centenary of his birth, is presently at the National Museum and is a must for the whole family to see. Not only is it a manifestation of Filipino life in colonial Spain, it also demonstrates the excellence of Philippine craftsmanship.

In 1564 Philip II of Spain sends Don Miguel Lopez de Legazpi to head an expedition from Mexico to the Philippine Islands. He is joined by Andrés de Urdaneta, an Augustinian. The purpose of this expedition? To find a "return route" in which ships could sail back safely from Asia to the American continents. Legazpi eventually stays behind while Urdaneta, fulfilling his promise, sails back, mapping the "return route" back to Mexico.

In 1571, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi declared what is now Manila, capital of "Islas Filipinas." Manila was to be a busy trade port with other Asian countries. It would be from Manila that ivory, lacquer, mother of pearl, furniture, silk and chinaware would be sent in the galleons to Mexico then on to Spain.

About us

One could say that the exhibit is about our colonization by a foreign power. But the exhibit is also about us, our architecture, our costumes and customs, our way of life in the past.

You will see the best of Philippine arts and creativity. My favorite is a *salakot* made of the skin of the *butete* fish! Talk about making the most of our resources—that poor, hapless creature would have never imagined that he could become a fashion statement!

Another *salakot* has embossed silver decoration probably making it very heavy. (But, hey, haven't we always suffered a little to look good?)

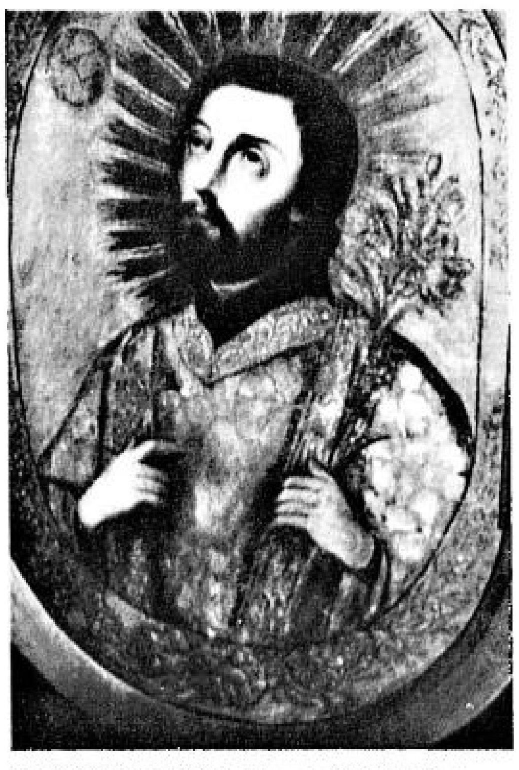
There is also the incredible 19th-century ecclesiastical chair. What I love is the detail (pointed out by Jak) of the pineapple in the middle of all that pompous decoration. It was as if the carver was saying, "I will put my Filipino trademark in the midst of such might!"

Then there is the single-barrel *lantaka* (cannon) the Muslims used against the Spanish. The details cannot be more exquisite. The base is actually a carving of a prawn! There are bird figures on top. John amusingly remarked at how ornate these tools of death were.

There were, as well, armors and shields intricately carved. There was a suit of armor made of carabao horn! It is said that local artisans copied armors from captured invaders.

But it was the Bagobo shield with its fantas

FILIPINAS/D2



17TH-CENTURY St. Francis Xavier oil on wood painting, with mother of pearl on sleeve

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VIGAN PLAZA

Heartland of the city of Hispanic legacy

Text by Anne A. Jambora
Photos by Chito Vecina

> Unique to the Vigan landscape are the town's three historic plazas that are 'connected' to one another and are easily accessible from any end

A TYPICAL structure in the Philippine architectural landscape is the town plaza, that patch of open-space land where townsfolk would often converge for major town events such as fiestas, or for a quiet weekend of lazy talk.

Spanish-era urban town planning decreed that a plaza must be constructed a mere stone's throw from the church, government buildings and schools.

Vigan City is said to be "the only surviving example in the Philippines that shows urban planning of the early 18th century." Not only has it one but three plazas near government offices, schools and the preeminent St. Paul Metropolitan Cathedral, whose belfry is higher than any other structure in town—another important detail in the town's layout,

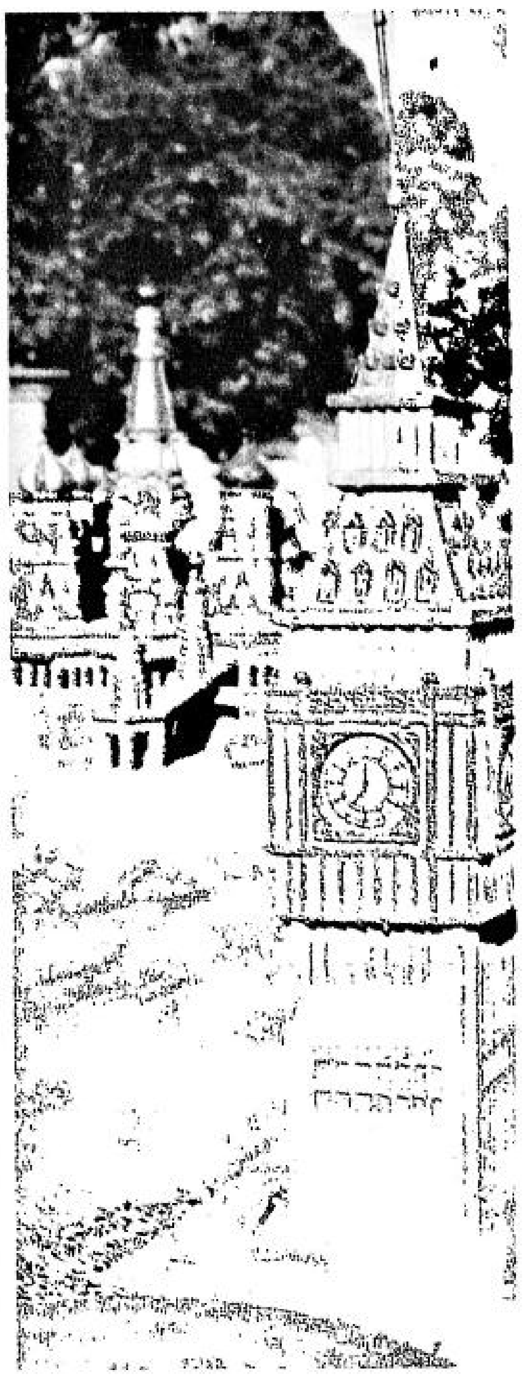
The belfry gives the city a focal point. Centuries ago, it also served as a watchtower, with a clear view of the China Sea where marauding pirate ships would occasionally appear on the horizon. The women and children then fled inside the church, while the men rushed to the shore to defend the town.

Easily accessible

Unique to the Vigan landscape are the three plazas—Plaza Encarnacion, Plaza Salcedo and Plaza Burgos—that are "connected" to one another and are easily accessible from any end.

Each has earned a place in the history books, but none is more popular than Plaza Salcedo, where the 17th-century Juan de Salcedo Monument, the oldest of its kind in Northern Luzon, can be found.

The elevated elliptical Plaza Salcedo is reportedly the spot where Ilocos Sur's fiercest woman general, Gabriela Silang, was executed by public hanging in 1763. The wife of local hero Diego Silang, she took after her husband's crusade for Filipino liberation after his assassination, and led the longest series of revolts against the Spanish colonizers.



ENGLAND'S BIG Ben and Moscow's St. Basil's Cathedral in Vigan City's famous Plaza Salcedo

When she and her army were finally captured, her soldiers were hanged by the Spaniards and their bodies were lined up along the coastal towns as a warning to the natives. Gabriela Silang died at 32 years old.

Many important decisions were said to have been made in this plaza, as *gobernadorcillos* often held meetings here.

The plaza originally had four sunken gardens representing the four seasons in the West, but these were converted into a lagoon—a water reservoir, to be exact—in the early 1970s to help battle a rash of fires. Today, the plaza and its lagoon are being rehabilitated.

There is also a miniature Vigan Heritage Village where the city's history and culture are showcased. The plaza's right flank contains miniature icons of the world, such as the Great Wall of China, the Statue of Liberty, the Parthenón and the Big Ben in London.

Interestingly, the St. Paul Metropolitan Cathedral and its belfry are included here. It's a reflection of the city's hopes that one day, their unique architecture will be recognized as among the world's best.

Arched entrance

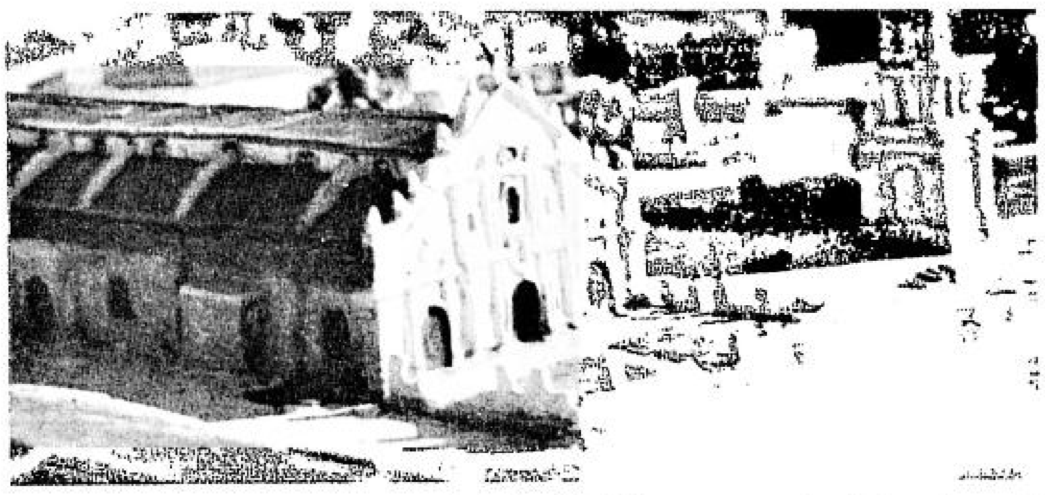
Near Plaza Salcedo is the Arzobispado, or the Archbishop's Palace, the official residence of the Archbishop of Nueva Segovia, Edmundo M. Abaya.

The arched entrance is decorated with two Chinese fu dogs similar to those on the city's cathedral, Buddhist symbols that always come in pairs.

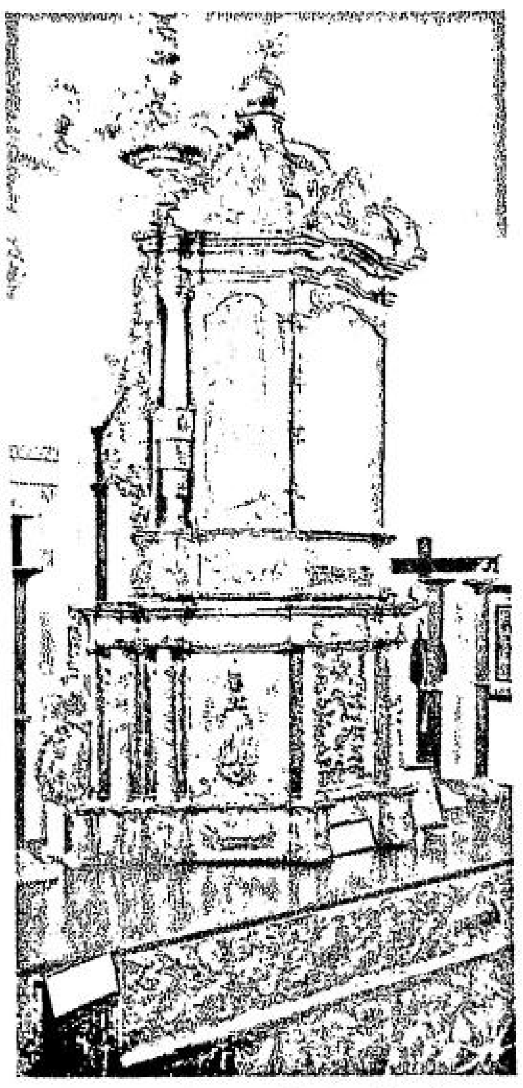
Completed in 1783, the structure is a classic example of *balay nga bato ken kayu*, or wood and stone edifices developed in the 17th century in response to earthquakes, fires, heat and floods.

Strong pillars are embedded into the ground, and the roof rests on beams. Stonewalls serve merely as "curtains" on the ground floor. This design allows the building to sway from side to side, but not collapse, during earthquakes.

The palace flooring is made of solid narra with wood pegs. Inside the residence is a Holy Room where authentic 17th-century ecclesiastical raiments are displayed, along with artifacts like antique *carrozas*, which are regularly paraded on the city streets once a year during Holy Week.



REPLICAS of St. Paul Metropolitan Cathedral and its belfry are among the miniature icons of the world at Plaza Salcedo, a reflection of the city's dream of one day being known worldwide for its unique heritage.



MOST of the objects at the Arzobispado Museo are from the Vigan Cathedral, like these genuine silver frontals, used only once a year during Holy Week.

The palace also houses the Arzobispado Museo, where Ilocano church history is traced via a display of old photos of various churches throughout the region.

Ecclesiastical artifacts, antique portraits of bishops, archdiocesan archives (including the baptismal certificate of martyr priest Fr. Jose Burgos), a throne room and other religious paraphernalia gathered from various colonial churches all over the region are also showcased in the museum.

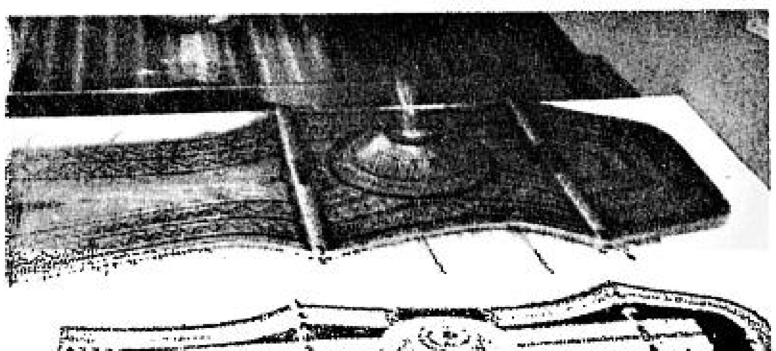
The Mestizo River is located behind the palace, which explains why this site used to be the city's immigration port, where galleons and Chinese junks or *parao* would dock to trade goods. A concrete staircase that leads to the river still exists to this day.

The palace also served as Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo's headquarters in 1898, making it both a religious and historic shrine worthy of preservation.

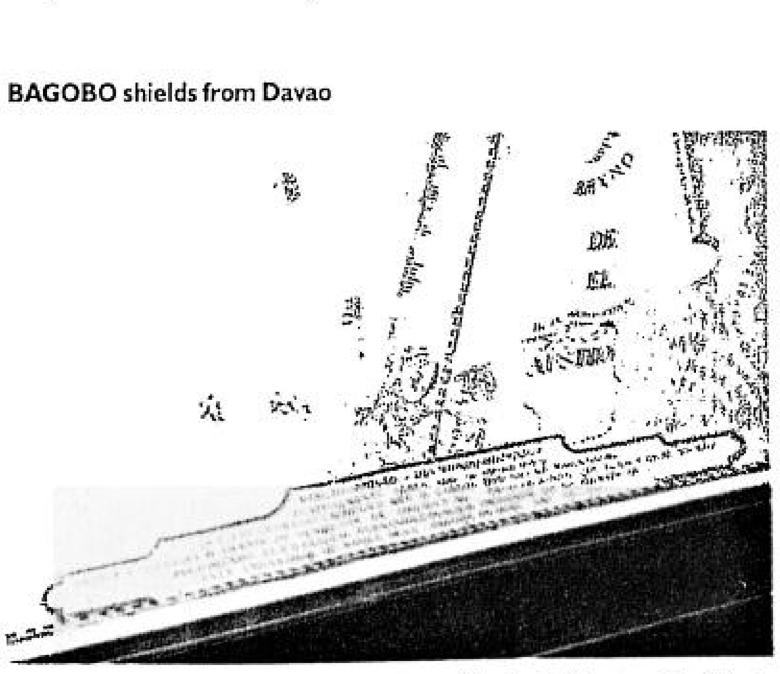
The Vigan trip was sponsored by Globe Telecom.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph

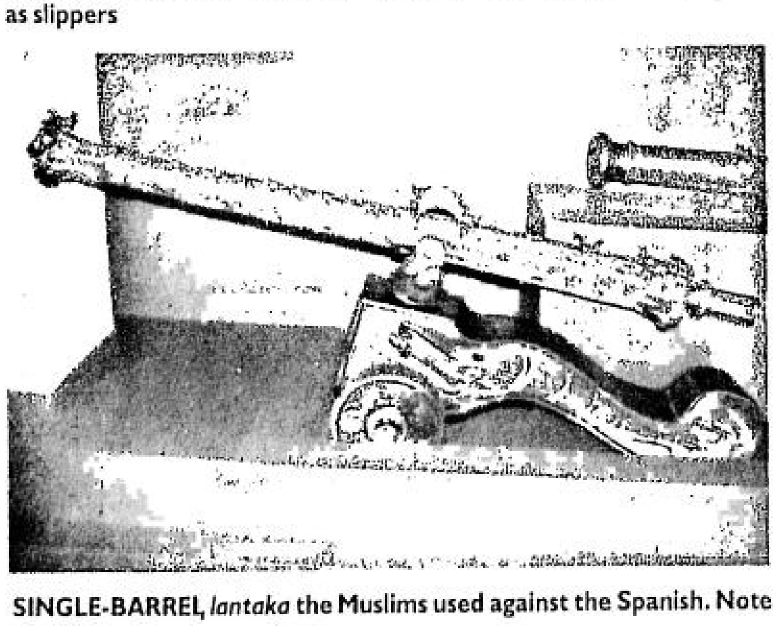
Filipinas and the romance of the conquista



BAGOBO shields from Davao



ANCIENT map of the Hispanic empire with the Philippines depicted as slippers



SINGLE-BARREL, *lantaka* the Muslims used against the Spanish. Note the bird and prawn carvings.

From page D1

tic decorations I kept going back to. Why, oh why, don't we see this type of craftsmanship anymore?

Jak told me a lot about the beautiful etchings of Lorenzo Atlas. Look closely at the details of his work. Did you know that etchings are done as drawings on paper first, then transferred on a copper plate? But you have to draw the images inverted!

In the etching of the Hispanic World personified, it's interesting to note how the Philippines was conceived. We were the slippers!

There are also scientific illustrations of plants and animals. Many of these may well now be on the endangered list.

Zealous friars

Then there are books written in Kapampangan by the friars. One can say that this shows how obsessed the friars were about converting us. They went as far as learning our language to be more evangelically efficient! But you could also say that they learned our language because they wanted to win our hearts. In the process they recorded for all time the ancient tongues of our people.

There are beautiful liturgical vestments that date from 1760 and lent by the town of Orense in Spain. The story goes that when asked to lend these garments for the exhibit, the people of Orense went up in arms. The mayor had to calm them down and give his personal guarantee that the vestments were coming back. I wish we were as vigilant about our own church heritage.

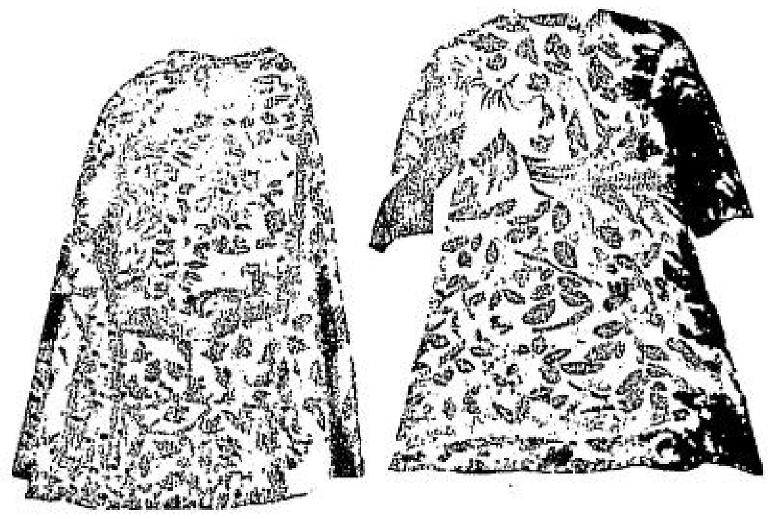
We have to express our gratitude to Spain for bringing to Manila this wonderful exhibit. Even greater thanks is in order for all those heroic Spanish archivists, librarians and museologists who lovingly preserved these pieces of our past for future generations to enjoy.

You can say that this exhibit is about obsessions and oppressions. But you can also say that it is about insights and inventions. I see a colonial experience where both sides learned a lot from each other, expressing the many experiences of cultural interactions through the arts!

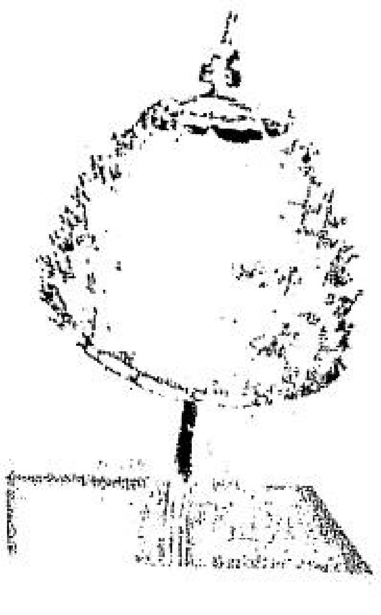
I could go on but would love you to see for yourself and discover. Be proud of what our ancestors were able to create.

"The Philippines, Gateway to the Orient: From Legazpi to Malaspina" ends on Sunday, April 18 at the National Museum.

E-mail beartist@filipinaslibrary.org.ph or address letters to Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati Ave., Ayala Triangle, Makati City.



LITURGICAL vestments dated 1760 lent by the town of Orense, Spain



BUTETE *salakot*

DETAIL of pineapple carving on an ecclesiastical chair

How to make it to the World Heritage List

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

SO many people have learned to value heritage places in the Philippines and now think that many of them deserve World Heritage listing. But not all sites are of World Heritage caliber. And if they deserve to be on the list, how should one nominate them for inscription? What responsibilities come with inscription?

The World Heritage Convention is administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco). The Philippines is a state party to the convention.

Within the territory of each state that has ratified it, the convention has the force of law. It principally says that the natural and cultural heritage proven to be of "world universal value" must be preserved for future generations. The convention provides protection for a select list of outstanding sites of universal value. There are over 750 sites now inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Wall of China and the Grand Canyon of the United States are definitely of outstanding universal value, and so are the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras. These are unique, stellar examples of their type. To justify their inclusion in the World Heritage List, the sites passed tough screening and had satisfied one or more of the World Heritage criteria.

Some sites may have great national value but do not stand out internationally as having universal value. These sites are not of World Heritage caliber. Examples would be the Rizal Shrine in Dapitan or the Emilio Aguinaldo House in Kawit, both of great national significance. On an international level their significance pales in comparison with similar sites in other countries. Therefore, both sites have more local than international value.

For sites of universal value, the process of nomination to the World Heritage List begins with a "Tentative List" submitted to Unesco that enumerates the sites each country intends to nominate to the World Heritage List over the next few years. Sites on this list must prove their universal value by citing the World Heritage criteria it meets. A site must be on this list to be nominated. The Tentative List is revised every few years, allowing new sites to be added.

Three types of sites can be inscribed in the World Heritage List: cultural and natural sites, and cultural landscapes.

Cultural sites are man-made. They must satisfy one or more of the six criteria that justify inscription in the World Heritage List. The criteria specify that the site must be a masterpiece of human creative genius (the Parthenon); show an exchange of human values (the Historic Town of Vigan); give testimony to a disappeared civilization (the Pyramids of Egypt); be an outstanding type of building (the Baroque Churches of the Philippines: San Agustin in Intramuros, and the churches of Paoay, Sta Maria, and Miag-ao); or be associated with the highest ideas, beliefs, literary traditions (the Vatican).

Natural sites

Natural sites are nature at its most unique, universally outstanding level. The four criteria for natural sites specify that the site represents a major stage in the earth's history (Grand Canyon, USA); represent significant ongoing ecological and biological processes; contain superlative natural phenomena; or contain important habitats for biological diversity (Galápagos Islands, Ecuador).

Cultural landscapes are mixed cultural-natural sites that exhibit a long interaction between man and nature. The categories are designed landscapes (the Gardens at Aranjuez, Spain); organically evolved fossil landscape; organically evolved living landscape (the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras); and associative landscapes (Tongariro National Park in New Zealand).

The purpose of World Heritage listing is to ensure site protection in perpetuity. The host country, not Unesco, assumes and pays for all protection responsibilities. A misconception exists in the Philippines that the protection required by World Heritage is severe.

The level of site protection required by World Heritage is no more than the standard, in-depth protection that a major heritage site deserves. What it means is that the site should have a detailed management plan to be followed, adequate protective laws that are strictly enforced, and the active participation of the local community and all levels of government for the protection of the site.

All funds required for site protection is to be provided by the local or national government. Contrary to popular misconception, inscription in the World Heritage List brings no dollars from Unesco. For World Heritage sites, Unesco ordinarily provides training assistance in all technical aspects required for site maintenance.

Being on the World Heritage List is no free ride unless the site is of the magnitude of Venice, Borobodur, or Angkor, for which Unesco raised a large percentage of the funds needed for conservation.

For the conservation of cultural sites, the principles accepted by international conservation practitioners and Unesco are listed in the Venice Charter of the International Council for Monuments and Sites (Icomos). The principles for conservation of natural sites are specified by the International Conservation Union (IUCN). Both organizations are the official NGOs consulted by Unesco for cultural and natural properties.

Meticulous

The writing of a nomination dossier presenting a property for World Heritage inscription is a long, meticulous process. Actually the dossier is a questionnaire that asks for detailed information on the site, its state of preservation, the laws that protect it, a management plan that assures its maintenance, the type of assistance it receives from the government and the participation of the community.

Other requirements are a statement of significance certifying that the site is the only one of its kind in the world. The statement is usually backed by a comparative study that concludes the site is the best example among similar sites that have been investigated by a group of technical experts.

A site evaluation is carried out by Icomos for cultural sites and by IUCN for natural sites. These organizations recommend to the World Heritage Committee what action to take on the site.

The nomination dossier is a document that stands on its own merits. It is evaluated by Icomos for cultural sites or by IUCN for natural sites before its presentation to the World Heritage Committee who decides on inscription. There is no public defense of the nomination, nor is there any lobbying at Unesco headquarters by the proposing state party to pave the way for the inscription of its site.

Why do we preserve heritage sties? The bottom line is we preserve them for our future generations. We do not preserve for ulterior motives, the most common being profiting from tourism.

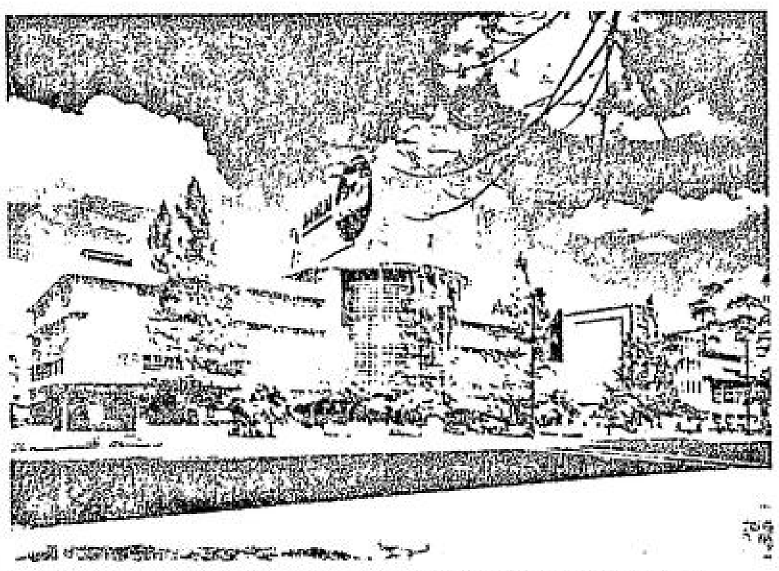
A site must be preserved with the total participation of the local community and government authorities following international conservation principles. Benefits of preservation are increased pride of place, increased income generation from conservation activities (construction, employment of specialized craftsmen, etc), and the growth of tourism. Sites that have been preserved solely for tourism purposes have not passed the test of time, losing the characteristics that have made them unique to commercialism.

World Heritage listing is a detailed process, requiring a long preparation period. If all World Heritage requirements are satisfied in the preparation period, then the site is ensured its sustainability and preservation well into the future. If the process is carefully followed, World Heritage listing can be considered as a prize for a preservation job well done.

E-mail your comments and feedback to afvillalon@hotmail.com

A SPANISH colonial fort on the Cebu coast

NOT many Filipinos realize the heritage value of the Taal Lake landscape.



DEMOLISHED Jai Alai building in Manila was an Art Deco-style building that could have been of international significance.

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Bella holds art workshops for kids and adults

VICTOR Bella, who graduated in Fine Arts from the Maastricht Academy of Visual Arts of Holland, will hold his 11th summer art workshop in drawing, painting and sculpture for kids and adults.

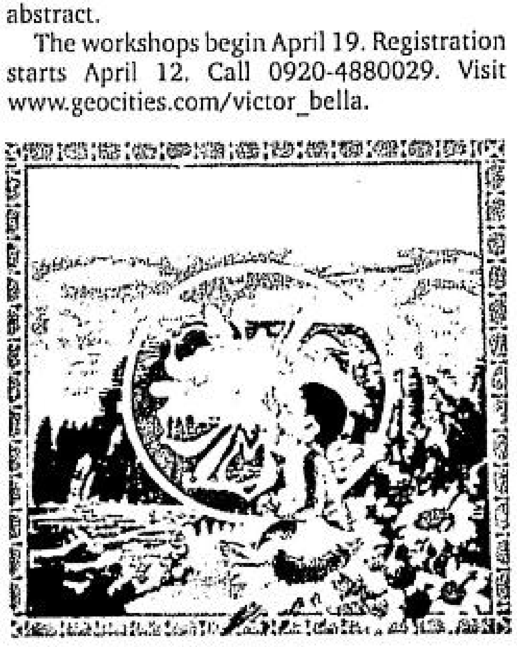
Drawing lessons will include instructions on how to use mediums such as pencil, pen and ink, pastel and oil pastel, and colored pencils.

Painting lessons include watercolor and oil, as well as contemporary mediums such as acrylic.

A beginner's sculpture workshop is also offered. Students will learn to mold three-dimensional designs or produce instant figurines.

Lessons are suited for both beginning and advanced artists. Styles include realism, impressionism, cubism, surrealism, eclectic and abstract.

The workshops begin April 19. Registration starts April 12. Call 0920-4880029. Visit www.geocities.com/victor_bella.



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Ultimate Frisbee	Hey Jude Beachfront
Chill Out Sunsets	Club House Parao
House Party	Hey Jude

April 8, 2004 (Thursday)

Ultimate Frisbee Hat Tournament	Hey Jude Beachfront
Volleyball	Hey Jude Beachfront
Chill Out Sunsets	Club House Parao
BIGFISH Chillout Sunset Session	Waling-Waling
Carlota Drumbeaters	Boracay Terraces Resort
R&B Party by Steve Mills	Hey Jude
Sunset Sessions at the Pearl	Pearl of the Pacific
Philippine Hobie Opening Party	Diniwind Cove

April 9, 2004 (Friday)

Hobie Triangle Course Race	Race Proper
Wakeboarding Competition	Beachfront
BIGFISH Chillout Sunset Session	Waling-Waling
Boracay Mardi Gras	Gold Crown
Sunset Sessions at the Pearl	Pearl of the Pacific

April 10, 2004 (Saturday)

Wakeboarding Competition	Beachfront
Chill Out Sunsets	Club House Parao
Sunset Sessions at the Pearl	Pearl of the Pacific
BIGFISH Chillout Sunset Session	Waling-Waling
Nocturnal Invasion	Boracay Terraces
Addict/Studio 23 Beach House Party	Aria Beachfront
Hobie Triangle Awards Night	Nami Villas
Slinky	Hey Jude

April 11, 2004 (Sunday)

Chill Out Sunsets	Club House Parao
Sunset Sessions at the Pearl	Pearl of the Pacific

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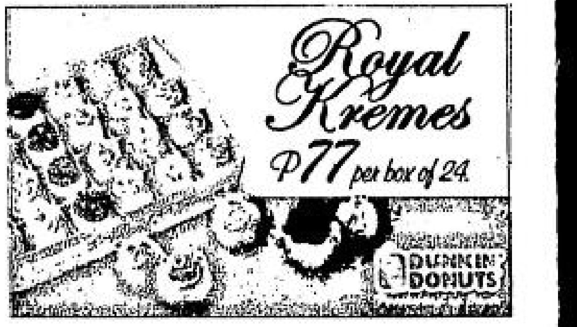
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DUNKIN' DONUTS

Neil Daza, cinematographer of 'Dekada '70,' captures rites of life and death with a quintessential Pinoy eye

LENTEN rites in Malabon

ROSARY and a prayer

Lens of faith, eyes of hope

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

A COMPENDIUM of seemingly disparate personal stories, but aptly conceived as a visual diary of sorts, best describes Neil Daza's second solo exhibit of black-and-white photographs. Told in richly textured, visually compelling compositions, these represent the artist's attempt to document the lives of people, including his family, as he explores the intertwining realms of death, religion and mystical thought.

Documented over an extended 10-year period when he personally witnessed the deaths of his loved ones, and the attendant grief and anguish the finality of dying wrought on the living, the 90-odd photographs capture those moments in the interiors of private homes and cavernous churches, sites where mortals and deities converge and commune.

Titled "Ala-Una Sa Simbahan: Images on Death and Religion," the exhibit at Pasilyo Victorio Edades at the 4/F Hallway of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (until April 10) reveals telling images of the nature of the Filipino, as personified by the ordinary folk who, for one frozen moment, lay bare their souls before God, drawing strength and supplication from the wellspring of faith and religion.

A social documentarist of the venerated tradition of "concerned photography," Daza succeeds in staying as intimately close to his subjects without their knowledge, or during those moments just before they could react to the obtrusive clicking of the camera.

Deaths

Among these motley photographs are recorded the first two deaths in his family, his grandmother—a well-loved matriarch who passed away in her old age—and an older brother who was prematurely killed in a car accident. Scenes from their wake at the Daza home, as well as the funeral cortegé that soon followed, thrust the viewer as close to the event as possible.

Daza's father, a military officer who later became a fugitive hunted by Marcos' dreaded intelligence operatives, and who later languished in prison for eight long years, died, in 1993, from emphysema. But instead of focusing on his funeral, the son, then enamored with photography, stole a shot of his mother right after they buried him. It shows his mother alone in the garden of their Parañaque home, praying before an unseen altar, her stoic face looking up for divine supplication.

There are equally telling images Daza had caught with his old Nikon camera, and later replaced by a Leica M6 Rangefinder, of passing funeral cortegés and unfolding colorful Lenten rituals, that he had seen in places he had visited while scanning sites for his video and film projects. These photos show an admixture of grief, anguish and unshakable faith in the divine mercy, qualities that the popular telenovelas continue to extol.

Daza's first photographic show, "Images of Manila," which was mounted at Instituto Cervantes, delved into the subject of gritty city dwellers, nondescript characters who eke out a living in the urban jungle such as workers in their daily toil and vendors plying their trade in the congested environs of the city, including the surrounding space of churches and sidewalks.

Folk rituals

Although better known as a cinematographer of award-winning films, including "Dekada '70," "Laro sa Baga," and "Yamashita Treasure," Daza started out as a painter after studying Fine Arts at University of Santo Tomas in 1986. He later worked as a director of MTVs or music videos, enroling at the film workshop at the Mowelfund Film Institute.

Winning a streak of awards at the Gawad CCP for Alternative Film, he shot a number of experimental films, documentaries and short feature films.

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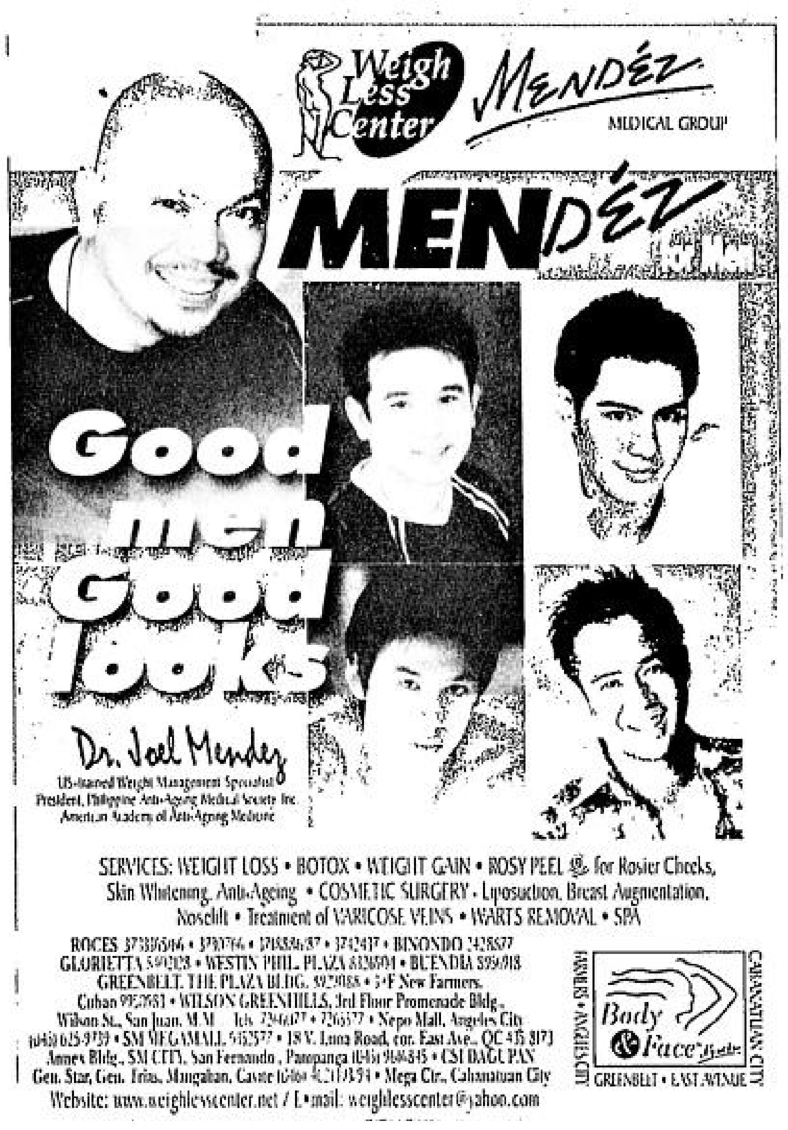
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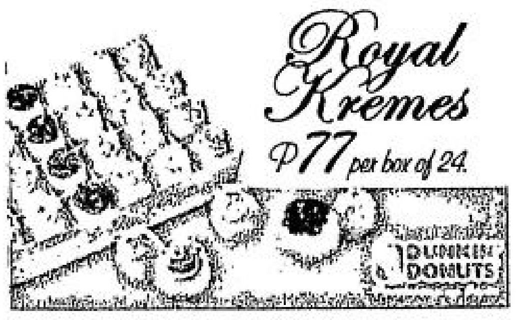
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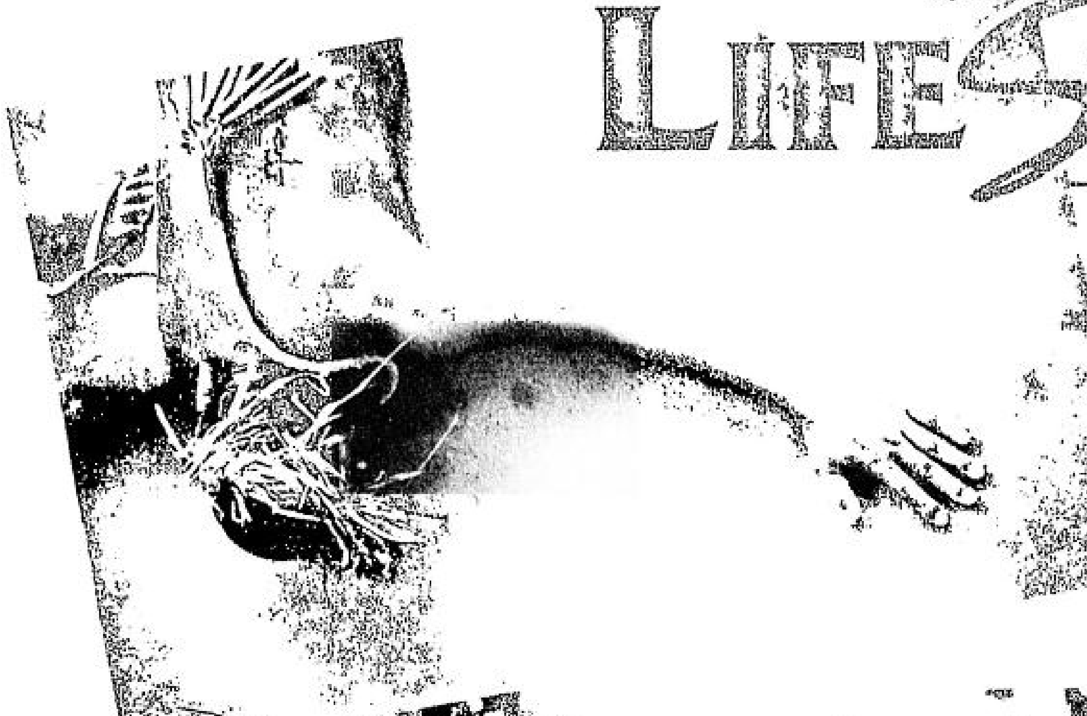
Neil Daza, cinematographer of 'Dekada '70,' captures rites of life and death with a quintessential Pinoy eye



LENTEN rites in Malabon

ROSARY and a prayer

Lens of faith, eyes of hope

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

A COMPENDIUM of seemingly disparate personal stories, but aptly conceived as a visual diary of sorts, best describes Neil Daza's second solo exhibit of black-and-white photographs. Told in richly textured, visually compelling compositions, these represent the artist's attempt to document the lives of people, including his family, as he explores the intertwining realms of death, religion and mystical thought.

Documented over an extended 10-year period when he personally witnessed the deaths of his loved ones, and the attendant grief and anguish the finality of dying wrought on the living, the 90-odd photographs capture those moments in the interiors of private homes and cavernous churches, sites where mortals and deities converge and commune.

Titled "Ala-Una Sa Simbahan: Images on Death and Religion," the exhibit at Pasilyo Victorio Edades at the 4/F Hallway of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (until April 10) reveals telling images of the nature of the Filipino, as personified by the ordinary folk who, for one frozen moment, lay bare their souls before God, drawing strength and supplication from the wellspring of faith and religion.

A social documentarist of the venerated tradition of "concerned photography," Daza succeeds in staying as intimately close to his subjects without their knowledge, or during those moments just before they could react to the obtrusive clicking of the camera.

Deaths

Among these motley photographs are recorded the first two deaths in his family, his grandmother—a well-loved matriarch who passed away in her old age—and an older brother who was prematurely killed in a car accident. Scenes from their wake at the Daza home, as well as the funeral cortegé that soon followed, thrust the viewer as close to the event as possible.

Daza's father, a military officer who later became a fugitive hunted by Marcos' dreaded intelligence operatives, and who later languished in prison for eight long years, died, in 1993, from emphysema. But instead of focusing on his funeral, the son, then enamored with photography, stole a shot of his mother right after they buried him. It shows his mother alone in the garden of their Parañaque home, praying before an unseen altar, her stoic face looking up for divine supplication.

There are equally telling images Daza had caught with his old Nikon camera, and later replaced by a Leica M6 Rangefinder, of passing funeral cortegés and unfolding colorful Lenten rituals, that he had seen in places he had visited while scanning sites for his video and film projects. These photos show an admixture of grief, anguish and unshakable faith in the divine mercy, qualities that the popular telenovelas continue to extol.

Daza's first photographic show, "Images of Manila," which was mounted at Instituto Cervantes, delved into the subject of gritty city dwellers, nondescript characters who eke out a living in the urban jungle such as workers in their daily toil and vendors plying their trade in the congested environs of the city, including the surrounding space of churches and sidewalks.

Folk rituals

Although better known as a cinematographer of award-winning films, including "Dekada '70," "Laro sa Baga," and "Yamashita Treasure," Daza started out as a painter after studying Fine Arts at University of Santo Tomas in 1986. He later worked as a director of MTVs or music videos, enroling at the film workshop at the Mowelfund Film Institute.

Winning a streak of awards at the Gawad CCP for Alternative Film, he shot a number of experimental films, documentaries and short feature films.

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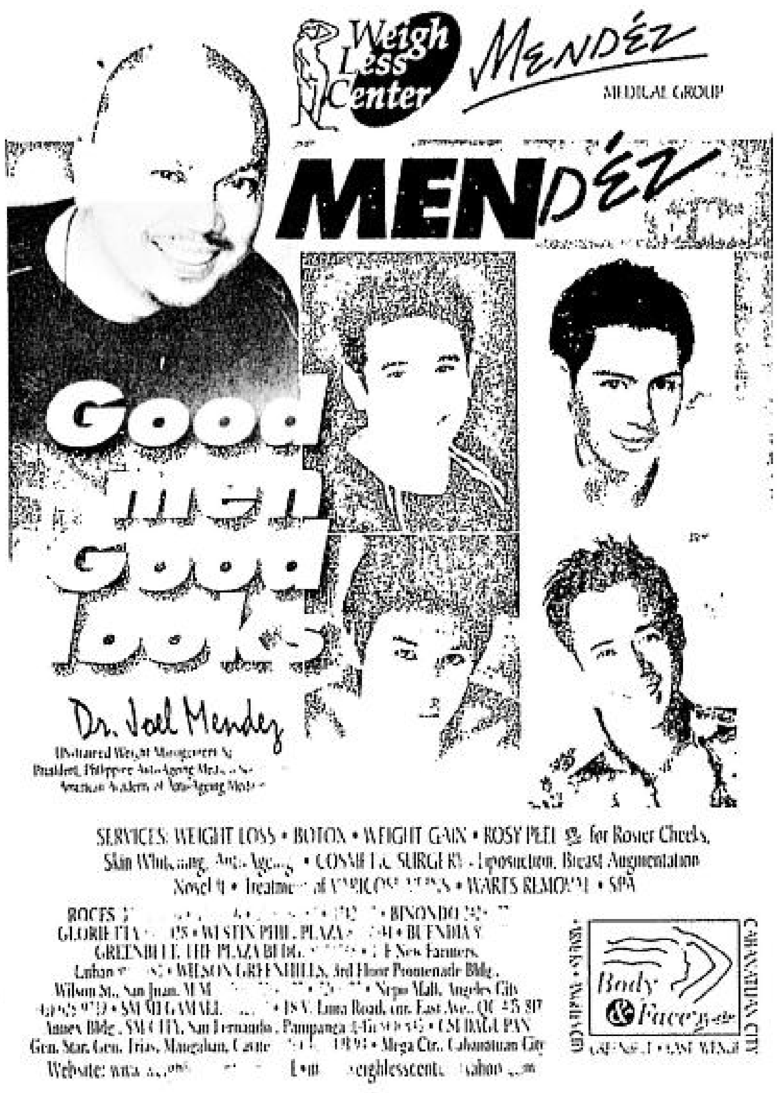
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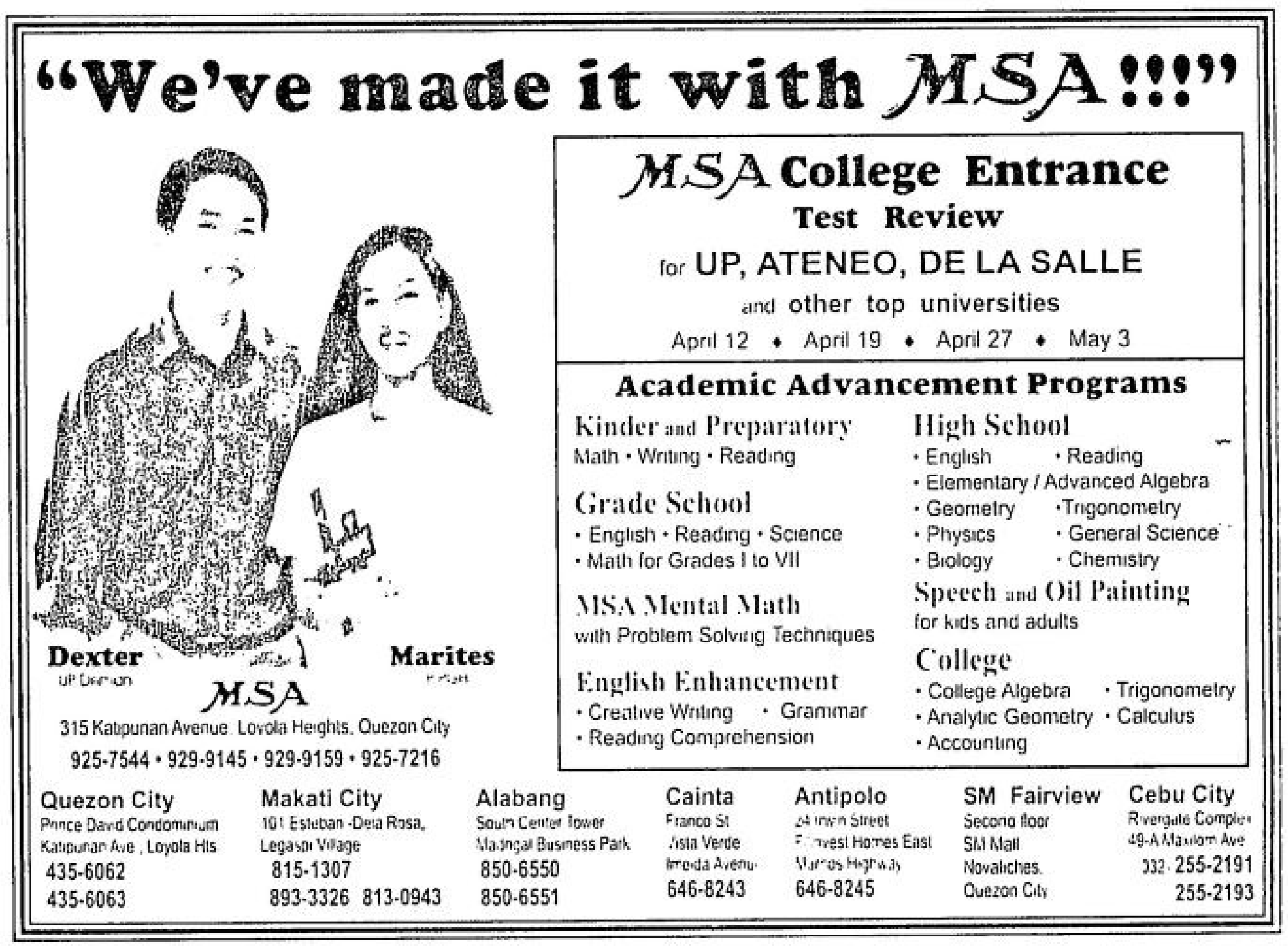
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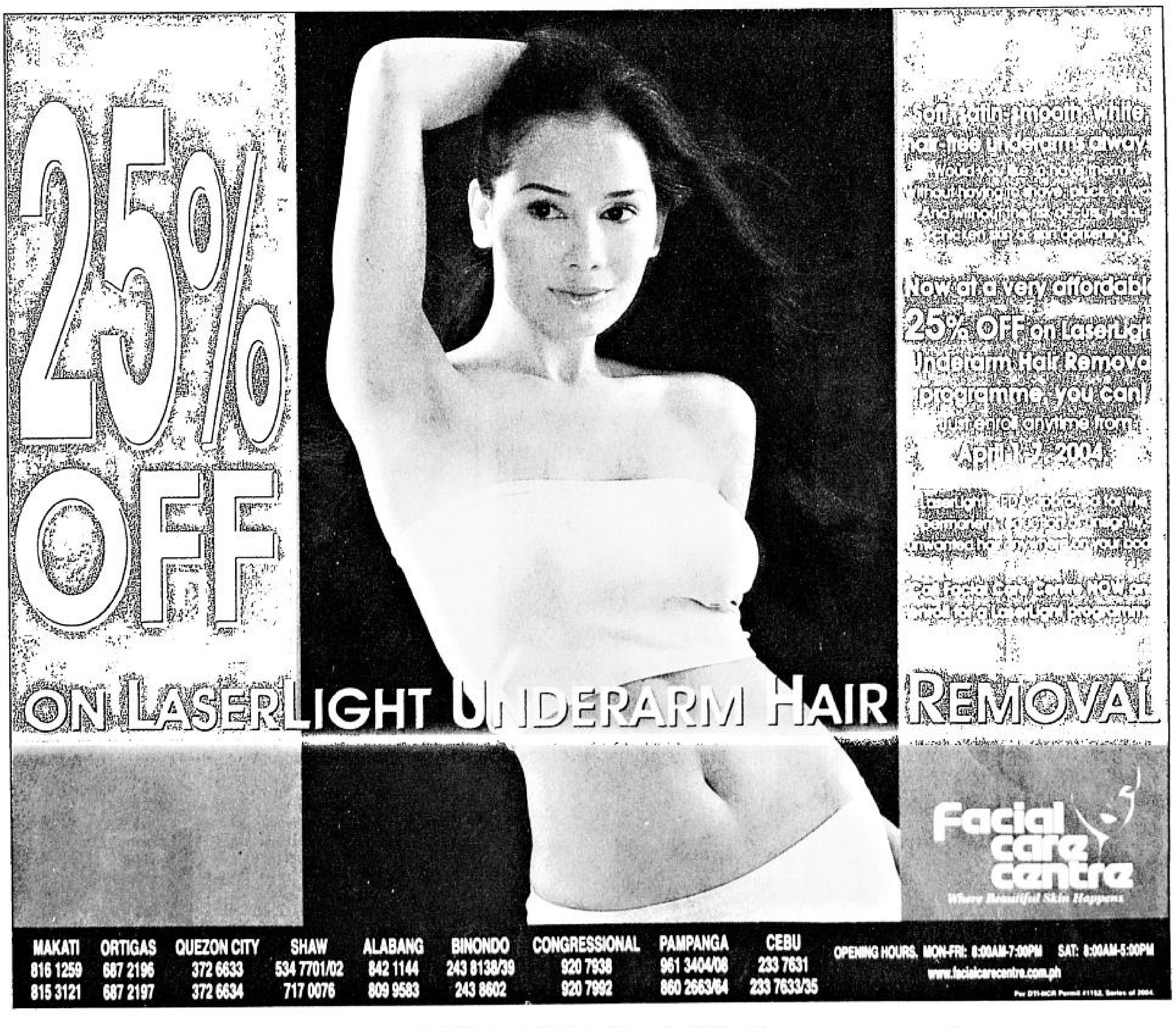

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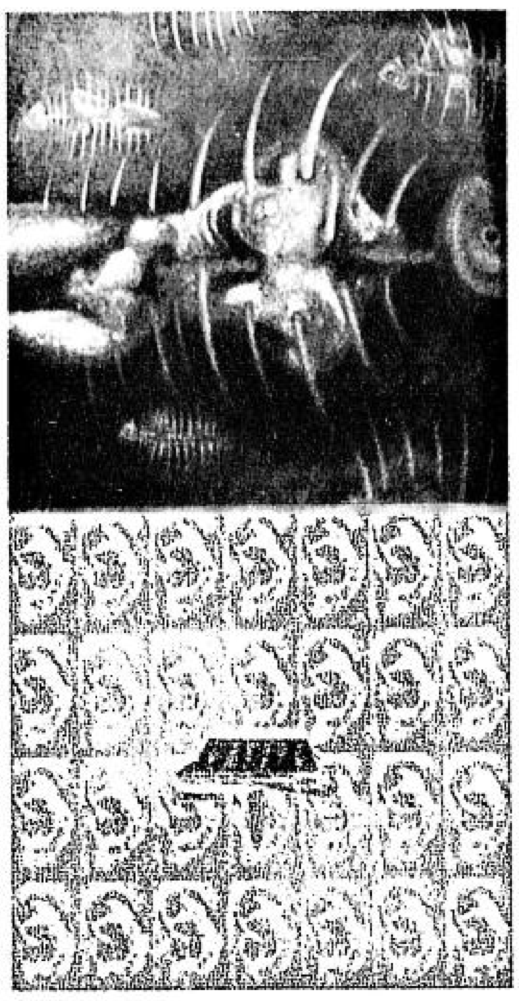
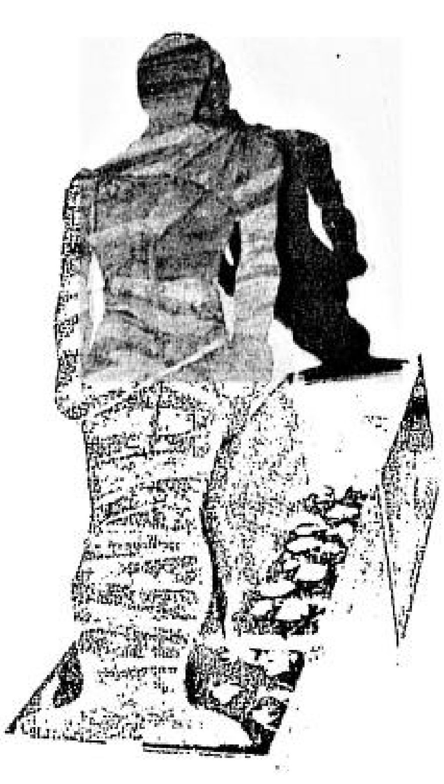
Shock of art and faith



"MAY Lunting Pastulan sa Panaginip": Crucifixion



"SANDIWA": Resurrection

By Constantino C. Tejero

JEHO Bitancor, an artist associated with social realists like Elmer Borlongan and Emmanuel Garibay, is out to record not just matter-of-fact social realities. Using expressionist technique with a dash of surrealism, he creates imagery that's just a bit shocking for normal social realism.

Bitancor professes admiration for the social realism of Egai Fernandez, the expressionism of Danny Dalena and Onib Olmedo, and the avant-gardism of David Medalla.

In installation, he has found an extra dimension to add to the shocking imagery of early social realists like Nune Alvarado and Charlie Co. (The shock of installation, of course, largely stems from its being more palpable than a two-dimensional art form like painting.)

One might say the artist went wild with his recent "New Works," four installations in The Big & Small Art Co. at the Artwalk, L/4, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

"May Lunting Pastulan sa Panaginip" looks like a painting in conventional format with surreal imagery. Limned in oil on the upper panel is a central image of pinkish-golden human torso and thighs stuck in a giant skeleton of a fish, surrounded by fish bones scattered on the grass. The lower panel shows multiple exposures of a computer image of a human ear, reproduced on tarpaulin.

Upon closer inspection, however, one discovers installed at right angle with the vertical canvas a copy of Adam Smith's seminal book "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations." Sandwiched between its pages are slices of bacon—honest-to-goodness bacon, get that—á la Damien Hirst.

Imaginary pasture

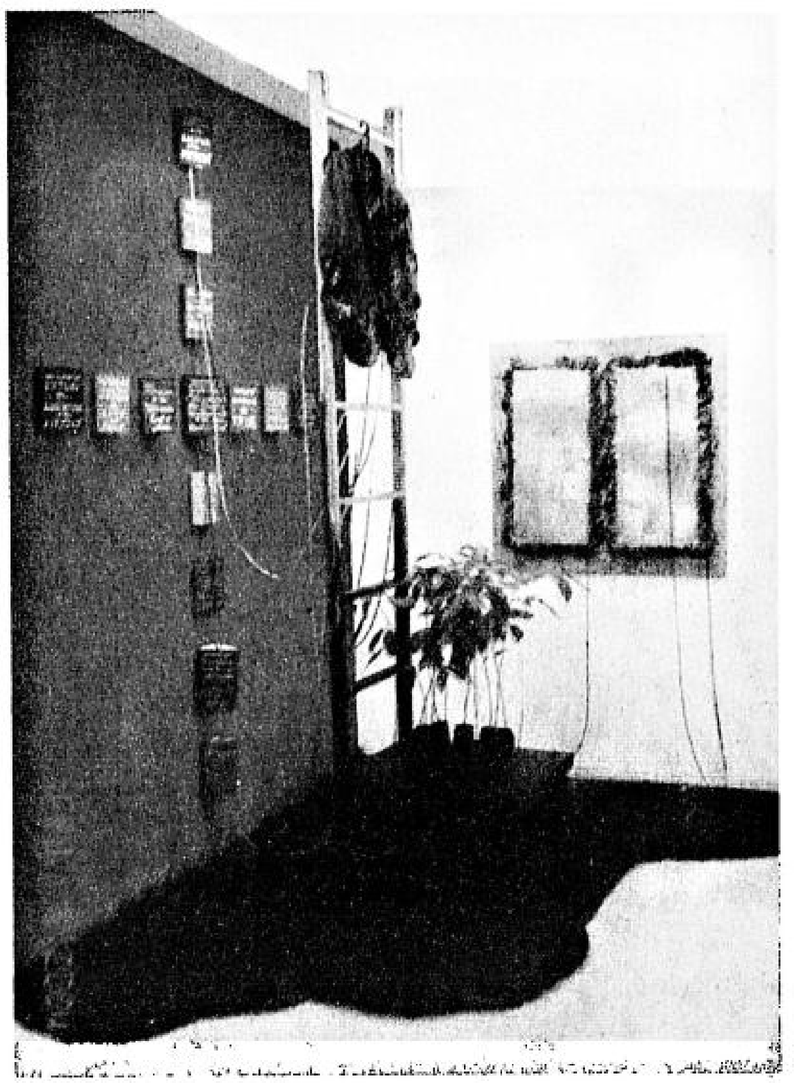
Yes, this one doesn't putrefy, or smell much, as the meat is dried. But does it have to be real, when realistic-looking rubber versions can be had in museum shops?

"*Gusto ko na* effect *totoong* bacon, *e*," says Bitancor.

That's for shock, to be sure. But sometimes bacon is not just a piece of meat. Here it represents the promises and allure of capitalism, says the artist. Thus, the shock is meant to be a wake-up call.

The ear is that of the multitude, deaf to the voice of reason, while the fish bone is the deprivation that's always attached to the person, the poverty transfixing the masses. Beyond this is the green pasture that exists only in the dreams of the common *tao*.

"Sandiwa" has a coffinlike wooden box painted gold, from which emerge two plywood cutouts of human forms swaddled with rags daubed with acrylic of maroon, violet, brown, gray, blue. Looking like mummies or zombies, the figures lean on each other's forehead over the open box, while their necks are weighed down by a carpenter's plumb.



"SA ABO ng Bantayog": Deposition from the Cross

Here the artist seems to depict balance in the economic setup. Everyone is a codependent. One miscalculation and everybody falls into the box.

Inside the box are numerous plastic bags of blood-red fluid. The box of free enterprise holds secrets—or is it something paid for with human blood, or itself the lifeblood of humankind?

Ideological dummies

In "Rebisyonismo," the artist gives visual expression to theoretical and historical revisionism, such as what latter-day socialists have been doing to the original vision of Marx.

A wooden ladder is set against a vertical plywood board painted with red acrylic, the whole wrapped in saran sheets and perched on a pile of books. Surrounding it, glued on the floor in a semicircle, are small styrofoam cutouts of militaristic forms covered with bandage daubed with black latex.

The books, of course, represent the source of clashing ideologies whence springs the ladder of human aspirations. The figures are the guardians of the new ideology, revised and reinterpreted. Some of the figures have fallen.

A more complex installation is the centerpiece "Sa Abo ng Bantayog." This consists of three parts, covering themes as diverse as imperialism, laissez faire, industrialization, abuse of power, urban development, capitalism, materialism, utilitarianism, Darwinism, hope and new life.

The central image is a golden ladder charred at the foot, perching on a charred table amid a ground of charcoal. Cups of red wine are scattered on the ground. Mahogany seedlings are clustered on the low table. Atop the ladder is hung a partially singed business coat.

The background is painted red and fixed with rows of multicolored books forming a cross. For titles, the artist has inscribed the book covers with familiar philosophical statements such as: "The strong must eliminate the weak," "Pleasure is the ultimate end of man," "What works is true," "The only purpose of money is to purchase goods," "The law of nature is the survival of the fittest."

On a white wall is a metal panel with shutters pressing on rags. This silvery contraption is connected with IVs to the cups of blood-red wine, as are the books to the coat.

Free interpretations

The weird imagery is rich with metaphoric possibilities, and the viewer is free to fill in the blanks. Being multilayered, the four installations, in fact, can even be seen as having religious meanings, depicting anything from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection, centurions guarding the Holy Sepulchre, a ghostly Deposition from the Cross.

A graduate of Fine Arts, major in Painting and Visual Communications, from University of the Philippines, the artist is obviously influenced here by Roberto Chabet.

"*Magaling ang* method *n'ya sa pagtuturo*," he says of his mentor. "With him, there is no one mold. *Hanapin mo ang sariling boses, ang* style *mo, at kung paano i*-express *'to na hindi nanggagaya*."

Another mentor he admires is social realist Neil Doloricon. "*Malaki ang natutunan ko sa kanila* in terms of exposure to art *at proseso ng pag-iisip*."

Bitancor attended a three-month training in painting in the Art Students' League in New York, and spent a three-month residency on a fellowship in the Vermont Studio Center.

Favorite artists include Botong Francisco, Francis Bacon, Josef Beuys, George Grosz, Duchamp, Van Gogh, Picasso.

In his recent works, one discerns a penetrating artist of sanguinary imagery. His is a social realism that calls for blood, more blood.

Lens of faith, eyes of hope

From page E1

It was during the time he was already engaged in video and film production work that Daza had found the time to observe at close range the rituals of the common folk during the Lenten season.

Beginning at the Quiapo Church, which he frequents while on the lookout for possible locations, Daza has ventured far into provincial territories where the faithful still cling to age-old religious rituals, rising to a feverish pitch during the Lenten season.

In these photographs of flagellants bearing their crosses and self-ordained faith healers dispensing the power of psychic surgery, Daza shows how people continue to draw strength when philosophical or rational thinking fails.

One particularly revealing photograph shows the hands of a healer furiously working on the eyes of a devotee wearing the emblem of a devotee to the Nazarene. Call it theater of the absurd if you wish, but such scenes are regularly reenacted and restaged, much to the delight of spectators and their benefactors and beneficiaries alike.

What these images unravel is our people's deep-seated propensity for quick relief and half-hearted solutions to their earthly woes. Daza's still lifes of ordinary people through the rituals of death and dying ultimately capture the long journey of the Filipino whose faith in God has remained unshaken even as he is confronted by the terrible pains of living and the more unbearable tragedy of dying.

E-mail the author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com

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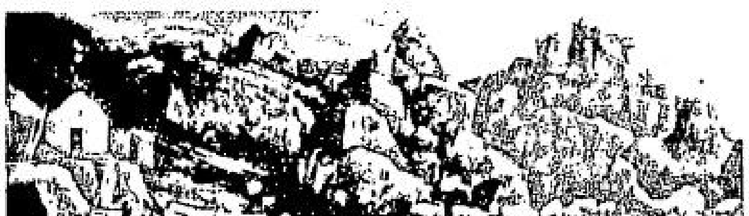
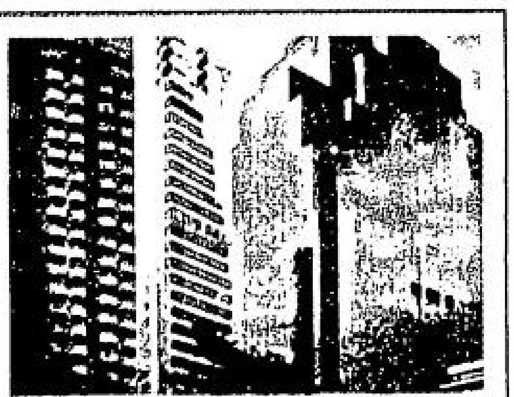


"EARLY Morning at Sabtang Island," by Michael P. Blanco



RAMON Diaz's "three -dimensional" painting

Briccio Santos at Mag:Net, Ramon Diaz at Duemila

VISUAL ARTS

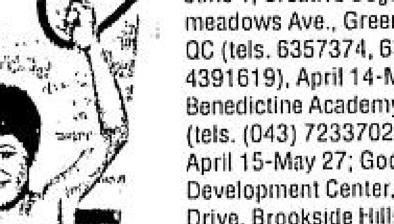
MAG:NET Gallery presents Briccio Santos' "Paradox of Silence" on April 14-22 at the ground floor of Paseo Center, Paseo de Roxas and Sedeno St., Makati. The exhibit coincides with the launch of Santos's book of "photographs, lines, verses and wordplay" bearing the same title. Curated by Nilo Ilarde, the show will exhibit black-and-white photos shot by Santos while wandering in Paris. The highlights are 130 contact prints mounted on frames and six blown-up photos from the original stills. Contextual codes—gender, race, class, and the like—are omitted or toned down. Call 8177895.

RAMON Diaz mounts his latest show at the Galleria Duemila (SM Megamall) until April 16. The show features "three-dimensional" paintings in the literal and figurative sense. They deviate from the frontal prescription of viewing art works, making it possible for the viewer to perceive the images through different angles. A former businessman, Diaz took up studies in lithography, photography and color separation in Belgium. Call 6343261 or 8319990.

GALERIA de Islas presents "Lukim Pinis Jipni" (I Saw the Jeepney) of Gickmal Kundun from Papua New Guinea. His works in pastel and pen and ink on paper as well as metal sculptures of abstract figures will be exhibited on April 17-May 8 at the third floor, Silahis Center, 744 Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila.

'SECURITY Blanket," a group exhibit featuring the works of artists from the UP College of Fine Arts, will be held on April 17-May 17 at Donada Art Gallery, Unit 201, Eagle Star Condominium, Fabian de la Rosa St., Loyola Heights, QC. The collection dwells on the artists' fond childhood memories and nostalgic favorites.

MICHAEL P. Blanco, a member of the Blanco family of artists of Angono, Rizal, is holding "Ivatans, People of the North," his first solo, on April 22-May 30, on the second floor of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.



"PAST," by Briccio Santos

SCULPTOR Fred Baldemor mounts "The Passion of the Christ", at the Artistree Fine Art Gallery (Level 4, Shangri-La Plaza) until April 18. The exhibit consists of a large molave sculpture in bas-relief and a suite of drawings in charcoal capturing the visage of Christ; and other images of Christ executed in charcoal. Call 6312080.

"ON Top of the Lighthouse," by Angelica Marie Adamat

TANAY artists Roland de los Santos, Macoy Solano, Roger Fulgado, Christina Dominguez and Angelica Marie Adamat mount "Wasiwas Bravura II" until April 10 at the Art Gallery of the Philippine Heart Center, East Ave., Quezon City. On display are landscapes, still lifes, Mother and Child paintings, and pastorales of the Rizal lakeshore town.

ART Instructor Pol Mesina Jr. will conduct summer art workshops for children and adults at the following venues: Aheadstart Child Development Center, 72 San Rafael St., Bo. Kapitolyo, Pasig (tel. 6319548) on April 13-June 1; Creative Beginners 76, Greenmeadows Ave., Greenmeadows Subd., QC (tels. 6357374, 6377928, 4391619), April 14-May 25; Regis Benedictine Academy, Batangas City (tels. (043) 7233702, (043) 7228511), April 15-May 27; God's Little Angels Development Center, Inc., 0265 Sunset Drive, Brookside Hills Subd., Cainta, Rizal (tels. 6552517, 6474504), ongoing until May 29.

SM Supermalls, Nestlé and Faber-Castell will hold free arts and crafts activities for parents and their children. The activities will be held simultaneously on April 5-11 at SM City North Edsa, Megamall, SM Fairview, SM Sta. Mesa, SM Manila, SM Sucat, SM Southmall, SM Bicutan, SM Bacoor and SM Marilao. Call 3617391-92.

Get Egg-Cited Over Easter With NIDO at SM Supermalls

Celebrate the Easter Season in the most colorful and artistic way this year with SM Supermalls together with NIDO and with the help of FABER CASTELL. Hop on and let your little Picassos' creative juices flow!

Let your kids start their summer vacation with a bang! Easter is just around the corner and on April 5•6•7•10 & 11, **SM Supermalls** celebrates the Easter Season with arts and crafts egg-tivities that will surely egg-cite the young and the young at heart. So let your little Picassos hop from one egg-tivity to another, exploring and developing their talents and meet new friends along the way.

NIDO Little Artist will bring out the artistic talents of your child through various interesting workshops that will be conducted with the help of **Faber Castell**. Your kids can dress up and decorate real eggs into fun and colorful Easter eggs in our ***Egg Painting*** workshop. They can also learn the art of paper tearing to make their very own Easter bunny rabbits in the ***Funny Bunny Ears Paper Tearing Art*** workshop. Bring out their creativity as they cut and shape art paper to different Easter shapes in the ***Easter Mobile Cut Out Art*** workshop. Paint as much as they please in the ***My Bunny and Me Coloring*** workshop and others can enjoy playing with clay and turn them into Easter Bunnies with the ***Bunny Clay Making*** workshop.

Your kids will surely have fun joining in all the NIDO Little Artists workshops in store for them. To join, simply look for the colorful NIDO Little Artists booth at the mall's Activity Area. Buy your child a box or a can of NIDO and they can automatically join in any of the workshops for FREE! Now isn't that exciting? Why don't you mark your calendars and get egg-cited over Easter with NIDO Little Artists Workshops at SM Supermalls! It's going to be 100% fun with heaps of colors and loads of laughter! See you there!

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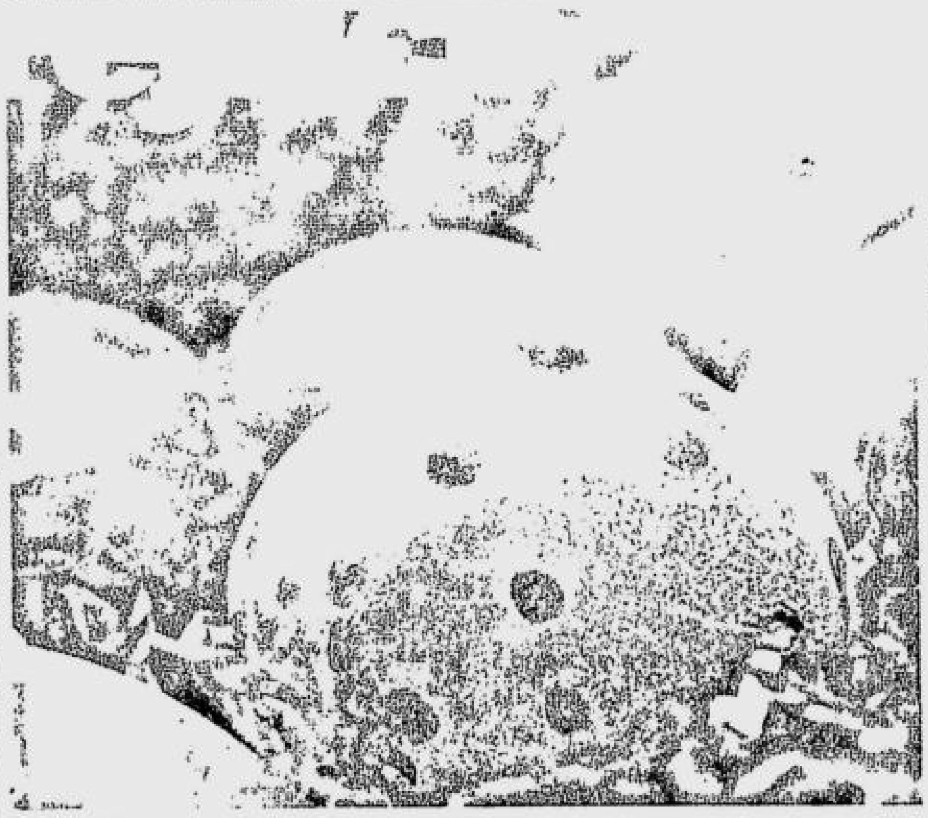

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FUNNY BUNNY EARS PAPER TEARING ART (1pm to 3pm)
APRIL 5•7 & 11
-Kids will be taught this paper tearing technique as they try to create their own funny bunny ears.

EASTER MOBILE CUT OUT ART (1pm to 3pm)
APRIL 6 & 10
-Using various Easter shapes and characters, the kids shall be creating their own and unique Easter Mobile.

MY BUNNIES AND ME (3pm to 5pm)
APRIL 5•7 & 11
-On a long cocoa cloth, kids bring out the little artist in them as they draw and paint their idea of Easter Sunday.

BUNNY CLAY MAKING (3pm to 5pm)
APRIL 6 & 10
-With various colored clay, kids can create and make up their very own Easter Bunny.

EASTER TREAT (APRIL [illegible], 2004)
FREE EASTER BALLOON
[illegible]

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From March 29 - April 11

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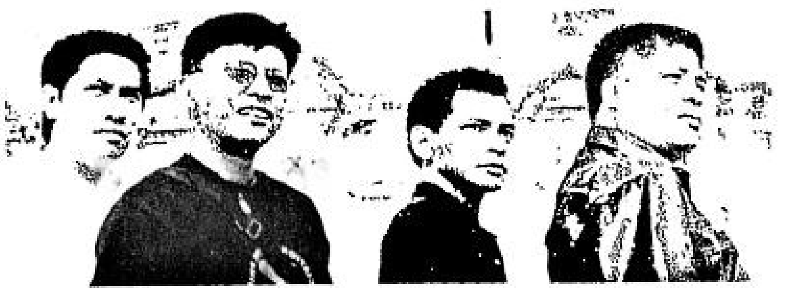
SM City Bacoor	Lower Ground Floor Rectangular Atrium
SM City Fairview	Annex Atrium
***SM City Manila**	Upper Ground Floor, East Atrium
SM City Bicutan	Building B, Center Mall
SM Supercenter Sucat	Entrance I near Round Atrium
SM City Lucena	Main Entrance B
SM City Davao	Ground Floor, Atrium
SM City Cagayan de Oro	Ground Floor
SM City Cebu	Lower Ground Floor, Atrium
SM City Marilao	Ground Floor
SM City Iloilo	Lower Ground Floor, West Wing
SM City Baguio	Lower Ground Floor
SM City Pampanga	Ground Floor

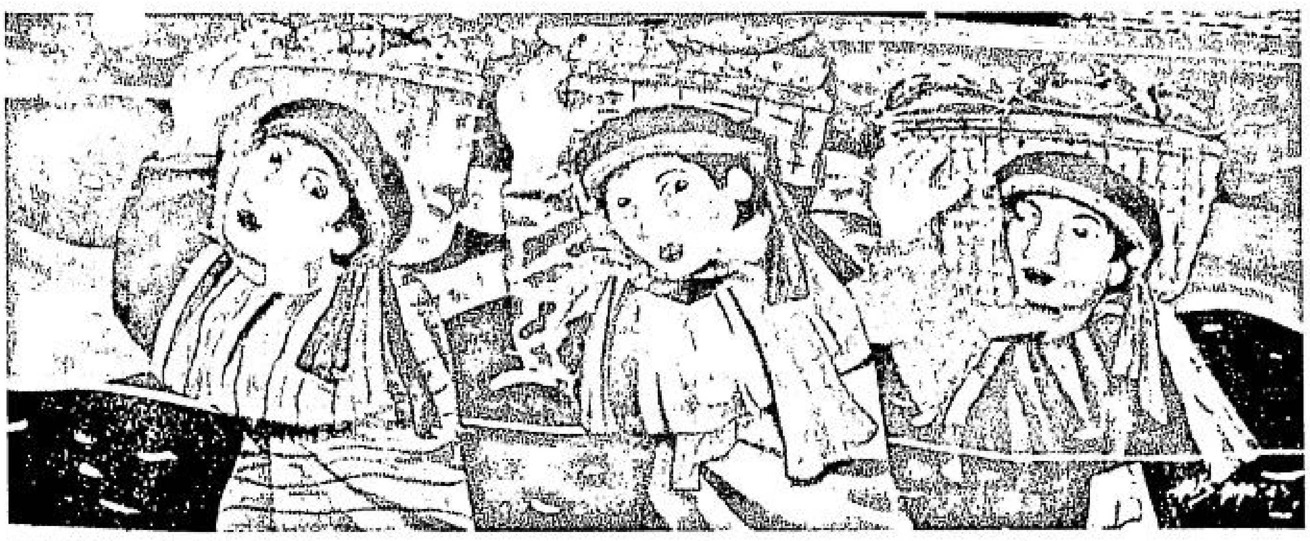
**From April 5 - 11 only*

Let your creative mind do the thinking as you ***"Guess the Number of Crayons"*** in the NIDO Little Artist Box and get a chance to win a colorful art kit and special gift pack.

NIDO will be giving away this special prize to the lucky winner who gets to guess the exact number of colorful crayons in the NIDO Little Artists Box! 5 other lucky winners will also recieve consolation prize give-a-ways!

So come on and start guessing! Promo period starts on April 5 - 20, 2004.


THE UNANG Hakbang Group: Wilfredo Offemaria, Aner Sebastian, Norman Dreo and Aris Bagtas


"TRES Kargador," by Aris Bagtas

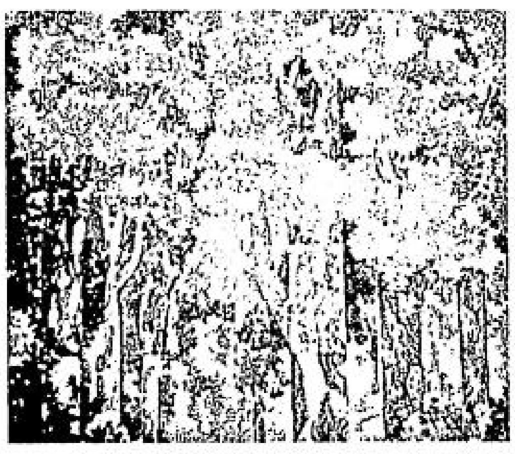
Unang Hakbang artists hold Renaissance show

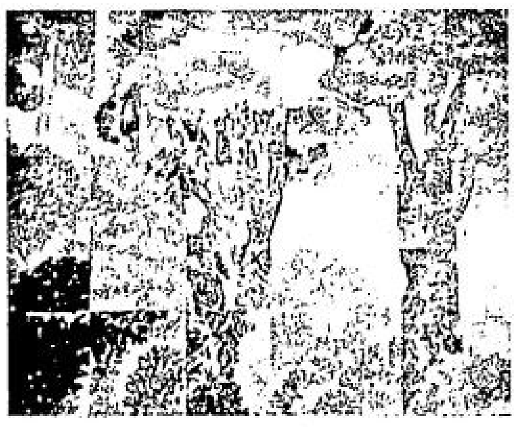
ARIS Bagtas, Norman Dreo, Wilfredo Offemaria and Aner Sebastian of the Unang Hakbang Group will hold an art exhibit tour in Europe from June 1 to July 5 in Berlin, Vienna, Antwerp, Luxembourg, The Hague and Madrid.

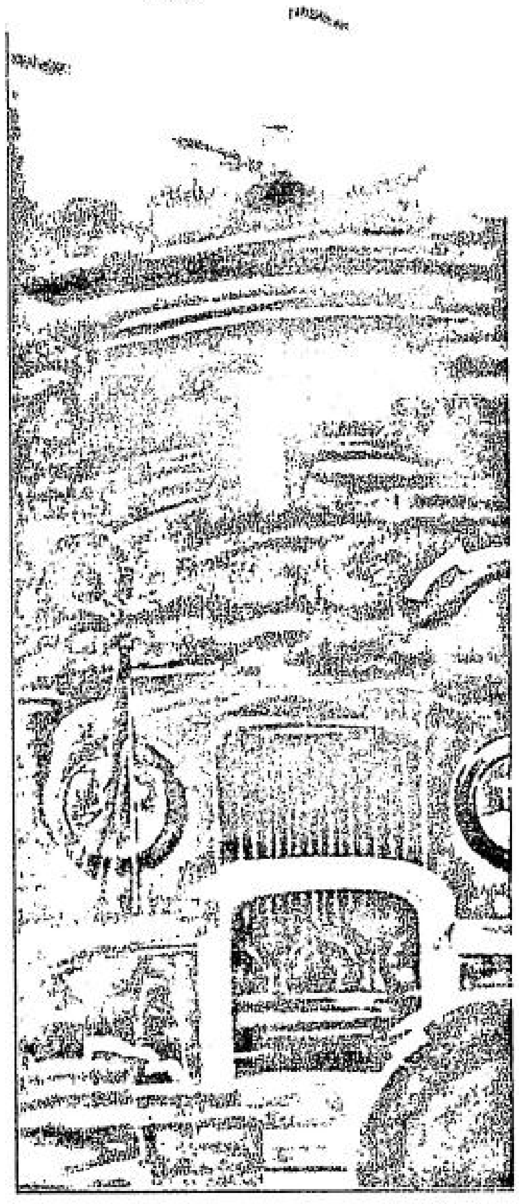
Proceeds from the sale of the 160-piece collection shall benefit the publication of a coffee-table book of the art group with annotations by art critic Paul Zafaralla.

The book, which shall also have German and French editions, is due out in 2005.

As a preview for Philippine audiences, "Unang Hakbang Patungo sa Europa," will be shown from April 13 to 22 at the Renaissance Gallery, 4/L, Bldg. A, SM Megamall. Call 6373101.


"RAINFOREST" by Aner Sebastian


"TANAY" by Aner Sebastian


"KING of the Road," by Wilfredo Offemaria

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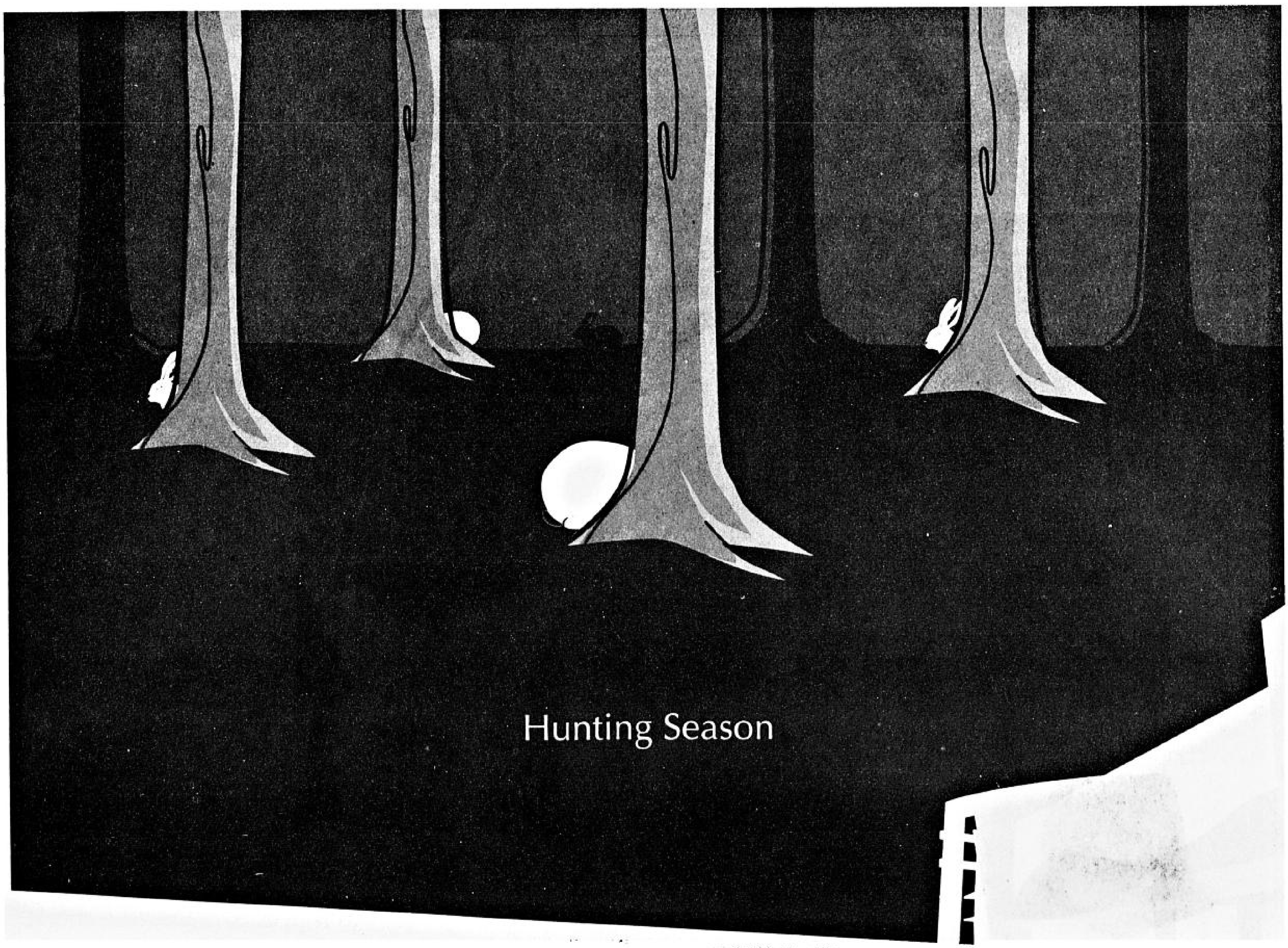
Hunting Season

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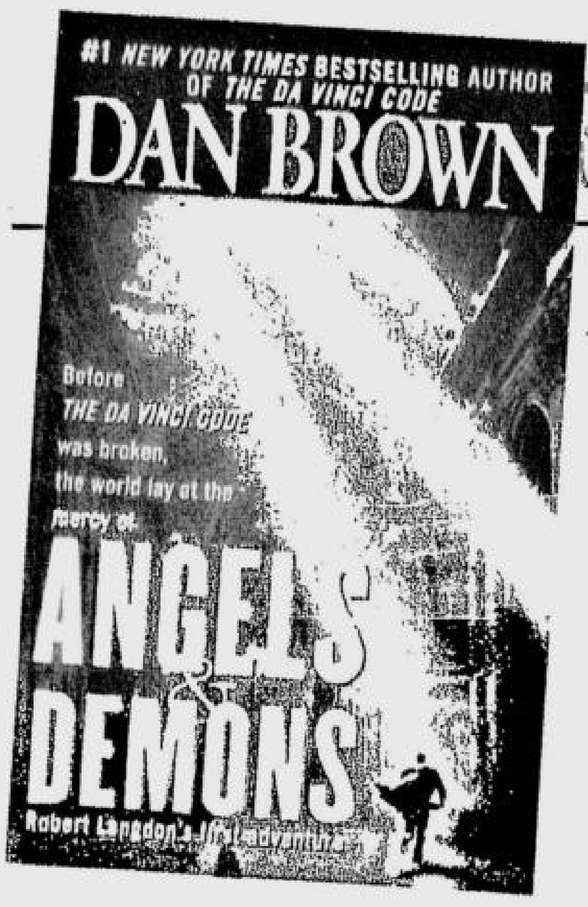
#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE DA VINCI CODE
DAN BROWN
Before THE DA VINCI CODE was broken, the world lay at the mercy of
ANGELS & DEMONS
Robert Langdon's first adventure

Anti-Christian terrorists use a scientific breakthrough to lay siege on the Vatican amid a papal conclave in the newest novel of 'The Da Vinci Code' author, Dan Brown

Science and terrorism vs the Holy See

"Angels & Demons"
By Dan Brown
Pocket Books, New York
2002, 608 pages

By Ruel S. de Vera

CALL him the anti-Crichton. While Michael Crichton revels in the science that propels his high-concept novels, sometimes immersing the reader in entire chapters of nerd-speak, Dan Brown appreciates the science and mystery but prefers the action. As a result, his novels tend to use the far-out premises to launch outlandishly addictive conspiracies, such as the mysterious Priory of Sion at the heart of the white-hot "The Da Vinci Code."

Yet the Harvard-trained symbologist Robert Langdon, handsome and yet master of all arcane knowledge, was actually introduced in an earlier book, "Angels and Demons." With all the attention "Da Vinci" has garnered (a movie is in the works), many readers are starting to look at the first appearance of this adventurous art teacher. And that's all good—considering that, in many ways, "Angels" is actually the superior book.

First of all, Brown first cut his teeth churning out thrillers about science and technology, as can be witnessed in his first two books, the arctic potboiler "Deception Point" and the cunning codebreaker caper "Digital Fortress." "Da Vinci" is more about a historical puzzle. Yet "Angels" actually combines these two elements in a rousing whodunit with multiple perpetrators and a setting to die for—the Vatican.

When a top scientist named Leonardo Vetra is murdered and left with an obscure symbol branded on his chest, Langdon is summoned to an amazing scientific retreat in Switzerland, where he discovers that an ancient group of anti-Christian terrorists called the Illuminati may not be so dead after all. And the Illuminati have stolen a scientific breakthrough of incredible power—the world's first particles of anti-matter.

Together with Vetra's beautiful physicist daughter Vittoria, Langdon races to find the anti-matter but is called to the Vatican because that is apparently where the Illuminati and the anti-matter may be. With the death of the Pope, the Vatican Conclave must elect a new pope, but the four top candidates have suddenly gone missing. Meanwhile, somewhere deep within the Vatican's sacred ground, a canister that could wipe the city off the map is hidden, a timer counting down.

And all Langdon has to work with are his research on the Illuminati and the secrets of the Vatican—and the Catholic Church itself. But all isn't what it seems. As Langdon hurries to unravel the clues hidden within art and his-

SCIENCE/ F2

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ang mga tao, kinuha ang limang tinapay
at dalawang isda; tumingala Siya sa langit
at nagpasalamat sa Diyos."
- MATEO 14:19

Ligo The Sosy Sardines

Love Letters from the SEMINARY

Enrico D. Gonzales, O.P.

Ode to a cloistered life

"Love Letters from the Seminary"
By Enrico D. Gonzales, O.P.
University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 345 pages

By Eldric Paul Peredo
Contributor

The book invites readers to relive with the author his journey as a one-time Master of Students in a Dominican seminary

THE EXPLOITS of seminarians and priests in a seminary is not a secret these days, thanks to the degree of openness demanded of the Church by people of all walks, which in turn was spurred by recent alleged scandals involving her priests.

Before, especially in the provinces, one could only wonder about what was happening inside the walls of seminaries—how formators and formands (a term for seminarians under formation en route to becoming priests) are living their everyday lives, how on earth they are able to tolerate seclusion from the rest of the world, and other such thoughts.

Now, we say priests and seminarians are human, too. A sizable percentage of the men you see from your favorite table in your favorite mall coffee shop may either be priests or seminarians, the latter if not currently, then at one time or another.

Pleasant side

Funny how it took sexual harassment scandals to bring to public attention the humanity of these men of God. Fr. Enrico Gonzales, O.P., might not have come out with "Love Letters From the Seminary" (available at Solidaridad and other bookstores; call UST Publishing House, 7313522 or 7313101 loc. 8252) with the particular purpose of averting the public's nose from that ugly side of the priesthood, but inadvertently, that is what his book does.

Or at least, it diverts attention to the more pleasant side of priests' and seminarians' humanity. Yes, we are human, he says, and our future priests are human, too.

Let us admit: When one introduces himself as a seminarian, whether presently or formerly, the usual comment is, ah, I know another one like you, you're no different from most males I know.

Myths still abound, however, and ordinarily the roster of questions center around seminary schedules and activities. Do you always pray? How are the priest-formators? Do you watch movies? What kind?

Gonzales says, "Many of my coristas went to see 'American Pie' and got a taste of American recipe: a gutsy Mediterranean libido but mixed with a plentiful dose of guilt from their Puritan ancestral memory. Nothing new."

Interesting compilation

"Love Letters," to be sure, is not exactly about seminarians. It is a compilation of reflections and sharings by a former Master of Students (what in other seminaries is commonly called the Rector), and the topics range from personality profiles, travelogues and musings on politics, to observations about the everyday life, behavior and discipline of his young Dominican wards.

Interesting are the entries on how seminarians should properly relate with the laity, especially women. Not every seminarian is meant to be a priest. Some seminarians fall for women. But definitely, one cannot be a seminarian and have relationships with the opposite sex at the same time. That's a hidebound rule.

In the chapter on "How To Handle A Woman," Gonzales suggests: "There is no single answer to this question. For indeed, one is the love of a celibate religious for a woman, and another the romantic love of a gentleman for a lady. Both kinds of love are valid, but we cannot have both."

Again, to be sure, the book is not limited to the above topic. But that could be the one thing that could stir prospective readers' curiosity. After all, that is what in fact people notice first. Start there, if you like.

But you'll do well to read the other entries. "Love Letters" contains a whole lot more about the joys and frustrations of its author, as well as his fatherly openness to certain possibilities. This is shown most gracefully in his story of Jess, a seminarian who left the formation for life with a woman.

At the very least, "Love Letters" should clear up some myths. Writing lightly and with a good sense of humor, Gonzales is inviting readers to relive with him his journey as a one-time Master of Students in a Dominican seminary. Although Dominican in perspective, most of the stories can very well apply to, and hence encompass and significantly describe, a lifestyle common to most priests, seminarians and seminaries.

That, by itself, should be able to pique the curiosity and interest of lay readers. And they won't be disappointed. Life in a seminary is interesting, enjoyable, and as normal as you can get. This writer, a former seminarian himself, should know.

Science and terrorism vs the Holy See

From page F1

tory, a shadowy person known as the Hassassin goes about his terrible business, determined to wreak vengeance on the Church. Worse, Langdon knows there is a traitor named Janus who is working against them, perhaps from within the Vatican itself.

Brainteasers

In a fascinating bit of reverse engineering, readers already familiar with "Da Vinci" can see similar historical brainteasers in a mixture of fact and fiction. Readers will test their own brain power as they try to solve the mysteries along with Langdon. But unlike the ornate and somewhat mind-bending puzzle in "Da Vinci," Langdon faces a far more grounded and manageable mystery in "Angels." Here, Brown deploys a challenging but not outlandishly difficult series of obstacles that require an exploration of tidbits related to Galileo, Christian art, sculpture, the Masons and, well, gravity. Consider these to be fun narrative booby traps for the so inclined. At stake is the present and future of the Catholic Church itself. Heavy stuff, indeed.

The interesting thing is that while "Angels" is not as ambitious and highfalutin as "Da Vinci," it feels more compact and more satisfying because it is, despite the anti-matter and the X-33 space plane, more believable.

But don't mistake "Angels" for a conventional thriller. It's still intellectual and esoteric, full of expositions and explanations. Indeed, in some chapters, two characters seem to be doing nothing but exchanging theories for pages on end. But the novel is also more action-oriented than "Da Vinci." There is a higher body count, a greater degree of violence and more lives at stake.

What is most evident is also how "Angels" seems more efficient and clever than "Da Vinci" in the end game. As Langdon comes closer to solving the conundrum that is the Illuminati, Brown then promptly throws red herring after another into his protagonist's path. The last few twists truly turn the book on its head and leaves the reader simply openmouthed with surprise.

A thinking man's writer, Brown is proving that he is a unique presence in mainstream fiction, bringing smarts and savvy as well his unique take on history and science to the table. If "The Da Vinci Code" floored you, then "Angels and Demons" should make Dan Brown a permanent part of your reading list.

Available in paperback from National Book Store and PowerBooks.

Fellows named to 5th UST National Writers Workshop

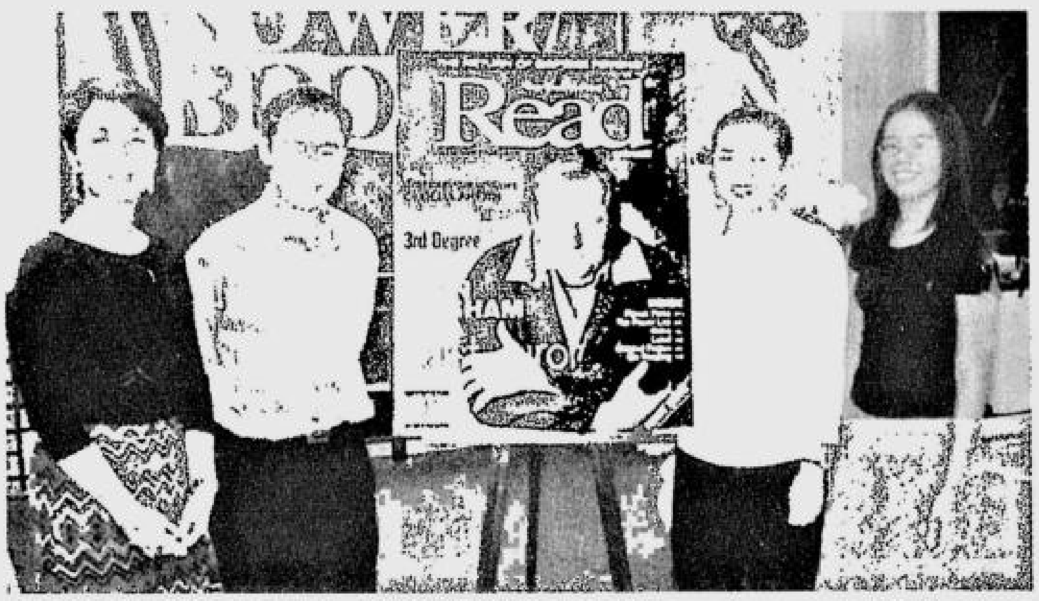
THE UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas Center for Creative Writing and Studies (UST-CCWS) has named 15 fellows to the 5th UST National Writers Workshop on April 25-May 1 in Baguio City.

The fellows for fiction in English are Michelle Abigail M. Pascua of Manila, Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo of Makati, and Ma. Lourdes C. Parawan of Las Piñas. The fellows for fiction in Filipino are Katrina Grace A. Valdez of Manila and Louie T. Navarro of Quezon City.

The fellows for poetry in English are Kristine Anne D. Gomez of Mandaluyong, Karen Ann C. Capco of Makati, Mercedita R. Baritugo of Cavite, Maria Loyva Conje-Fernandez and Maria Isabel G. de Ungria of Manila. The fellows for poetry in Filipino are Deni Rose M. Afinidad of Rizal, Joseph DL Saguid of Marinduque and Neri Nuyda Ronatay of Albay.

There will also be a visiting fellow for English fiction from the University of Wollongong in New South Wales, Australia.

Non-Manila fellows will be provided transportation fare. All fellows will be provided board, lodging and allowance. Workshop directors are Dr. Ophelia Dimalanta, Dr. Cirilo Bautista and National Artist F. Sionil Jose.



READ Magazine associate editor Fay Ejercito, Powerbooks operations manager Gabby Licauco, Read Magazine editor in chief Nina Gamboa and contributor Maria Gabriela Aparentado

New magazine promotes reading

POWERBOOKS, the specialty bookstore, has launched Read Magazine, the first-ever local magazine on books made for and by book lovers. The full-color glossy will be distributed quarterly and be given for free for a minimum one-day purchase (single or accumulated) worth P1,000 at any PowerBooks branch. It can also be purchased separately.

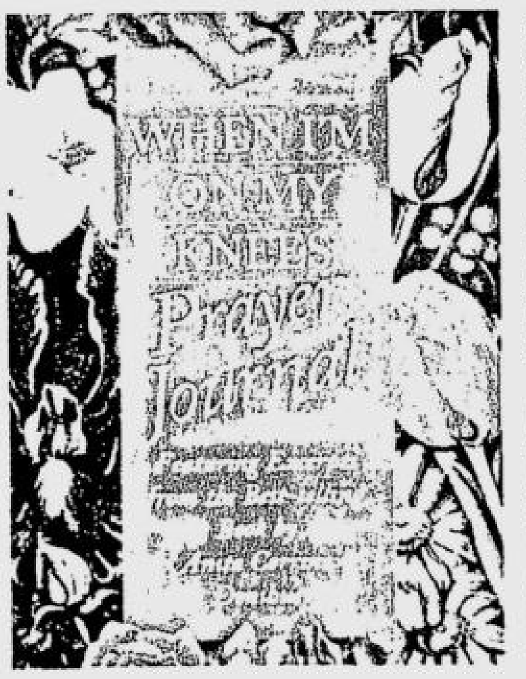
Read Magazine aims to encourage habitual reading by introducing the best and latest books. The first issue features books now debuting worldwide: John Grisham's "The Last Juror," James Patterson's "3rd Degree" and rookie novelist Cecelia Ahern's "PS, I Love You."

The regular sections are: Power Picks with selections from various genres; Retro, which encourages readers to revisit contemporary classics; Lokal, which showcases Philippine literature; On Reading, which discusses the joys of reading; the column From the Secret Files of Captain Psycho, and a section where literary pieces are published for the first time. There are also the Quiz and Trivia pages.

Read Magazine is now available exclusively at PowerBooks in Greenbelt 4 and Glorietta 3 in Ayala Center, Makati, and Corte delas Palmas, Alabang Town Center.

Call 7576428 to 29.

Books on heaven, prayer and love

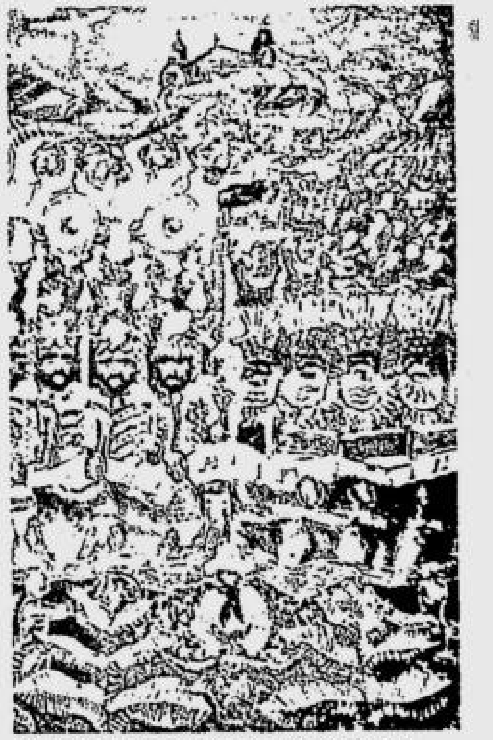


FORGET angels playing harps. In "A Travel Guide to Heaven," Anthony DeStefano takes the reader on a tour of heaven, painting it as a dynamic place of unlimited joy, using Scripture and dramatic imagination to fill in details about the afterlife.

"When I'm On My Knees: Prayer Journal" by Anita Corrine Donihue is a compilation of prayers from a woman's point of view. Packaged in an attractive leatherette cover, the book also includes hymns, poems and anecdotes that focus on prayer.

In "A Girl's Best Friend," after a love disaster, Isabel Palmer becomes convinced that the only male she truly needs in her life is Henry, her lovable wolfhound. But even with her new resolve, Izzy starts to feel that familiar itch and it's all because of handsome vet Nick.

The books are available at PowerBooks Specialty Store in Greenbelt 4 (7576428/29), Megamall (6352892), Alabang (8505662), and Glorietta (7527075).



"IMPRESSION, Pilipinas," by Henry Royales

CFA holds summer media workshops

COMMUNICATION Foundation for Asia (CFA) announces its summer training workshop series for students, professionals and enthusiasts who believe in the role of electronic media for social transformation. Dubbed as "E-Media for a Cause," courses are: Scriptwriting Workshop for Video and Radio (April 19-21), Video Production (April 27-30), Radio Production (May 21-22) and Non-Linear Editing (April 15-17). Computer courses are also offered: Photoshop (April 30), Web Design (May 6-8), Basic Flash Animation (May 17-19), Powerpoint (May 21), Publisher (May 28). Students, NGOs and church workers can avail of special rates. Call 7132979, 7147233, 7132981 to 86 local 716 (ask for Ging, Connie or Ramil), or 0918-2967285, 0927-5250661.

May Peace and Joy Fill Your Heart
An Easter Wish for You

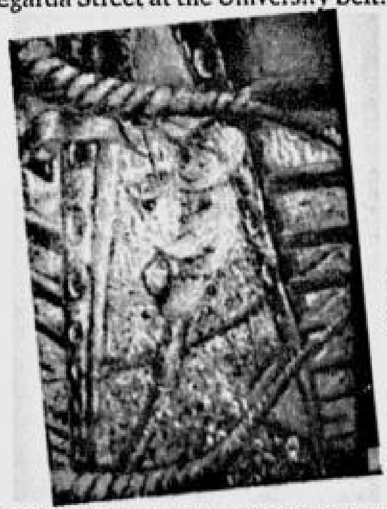
THE MESSAGE of Easter is rebirth, life and new beginnings—a message worth sharing to friends and family by sending a thoughtful note or a Hallmark card, available at National Book Store.

Art supply store discovers new talents

THE DEOVIR Arts Inc., which provides art supplies to art students and professionals, held recently an on-the-spot art contest at its store in SM City Manila. Tackling the theme, "The Role of Art in Today's Filipino Society," some 170 college students from Metro Manila joined the contest.

Winners were Henry Royales, grand prize; Cesar Diego, second prize; John Paul Antido, third prize; and Ryan Jara, fourth prize.

The event marked the 25th anniversary of Deovir, which also has a store on Legarda Street at the University Belt.



"PALIGSAHAN in the City," by Cesar Diego

Teacher Education (PAFT

SOME of the Pafte chapter presidents with Mentoring the Mentors facilitator Lirio Mapa (second from left) of the Center for Leadership and Change and program director Chinit Rufino (third from right)

EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Mentors of social transformers

By Chinit Rufino
Contributor

> *"In our hands there's a world in our care... lies the power we share...*
> *it can grow even more than we know... in our hands..."*

THIS was the refrain of the "theme song" of the Mentoring the Mentors session in Tagaytay recently.

Sponsored by the Foundation for Worldwide People Power Inc. for chapter presidents of the Philippine Association for Teacher Education (Pafte), we enthusiastically embarked on becoming "education revolutionaries" and in bringing back the nurturing dimension of teaching.

We were inspired to introduce a deeper and broader value to teaching that was anchored on the need for teachers to be role models for the young. The sessions combined inspirational and practical activities that engaged the teacher's total person.

There were 22 participants led by the national president, Dr. Amor de Torres; vice president for Mindanao and concurrent Region 11 president, Dr. Celia Andas; Assistant Education Secretary and concurrent Region 6 president, Dr. Ofelia Posecion; treasurer and concurrent Region 4A president, Dr. Mercedes Macarandang; public relations officer, Dr. Faith Bachiller; and directors Dr. Merlea Cabalquinto, concurrent Region 7 president; Prof. Felicitas Falcatan and Dr. Rodrigo B. Javier, who is also concurrent Region 1 president.

A very fitting beginning was the keynote address of Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Commissioner Ma. Cristina Padolina. She challenged participants not only to develop in their students critical thinking, communication skills in the local language and in English, creativity, expertise in some fields of knowledge, a culture of excellence, interpersonal and team skills but also, and very important at this time—skills in nation-building.

The message was reinforced as the participants went through dynamic and creative activities where they looked at the prevailing focus on the "*akin,*" "*palusot,*" "*pwede na,*" materialism, disrespect, cheating/lying so they can reestablish the order of values of "*atin,*" honesty, "*pwede pa,*" simplicity, respect, integrity and love of country.

While character formation was revisited, further discussions on mentoring as a new approach to learning, the key skills and competencies mentors need to possess for the various stages of the mentoring process, and the benefits of mentoring were interestingly presented.

Aside from becoming empowered agents of social change by developing their mentoring skills, Batch 1 will have the responsibility to organize the training of trainers to design and implement mentoring programs in their respective regions.

Together with the very competent and caring mentors Dr. Celia Adriano, Lirio Mapa, Dr. Evelyn Mejillano and the writer, who facilitated the MMP, a very successful Batch 1 graduated with a strong commitment to reinvent teacher education starting with character formation to continuing professional education, essential factors that will propel the education revolution and make a difference in society.

The author is the Mentoring the Mentors Program director of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power.

Education
agaytay

PAFTE national president Amor de Torres and Dr. Celia Andas, VP for Mindanao and concurrent Region XI president

Bulacan honors women achievers

LINABELLE Ruth Ramp Villarica leads this year's roster of awardees of the Gawad Medalyang Ginto ng Bulacan. She receives the Natatanging Babae ng Bulacan 2004, the highest individual honor conferred by the provincial body, the Panlalawigang Komisyon para sa Kababaihan ng Bulakan (PKKB).

LINABELLE Ruth Villarica

The awards were given to the province's outstanding women engaged in various fields and expertise as well as to women's organizations in celebration of International Women's Day.

Villarica is a member of the Soroptimist International of Meycauayan Council of Advisers and national treasurer of the Soroptimist International of the Philippines Region, an international organization of women in management and the professions.

She is also president of the Pambayang Konseho pare sa Kababaihan ng Meycauayan, the umbrella organization of several local women nongovernment organizations that serves as Bantay-Alalay of the local government.

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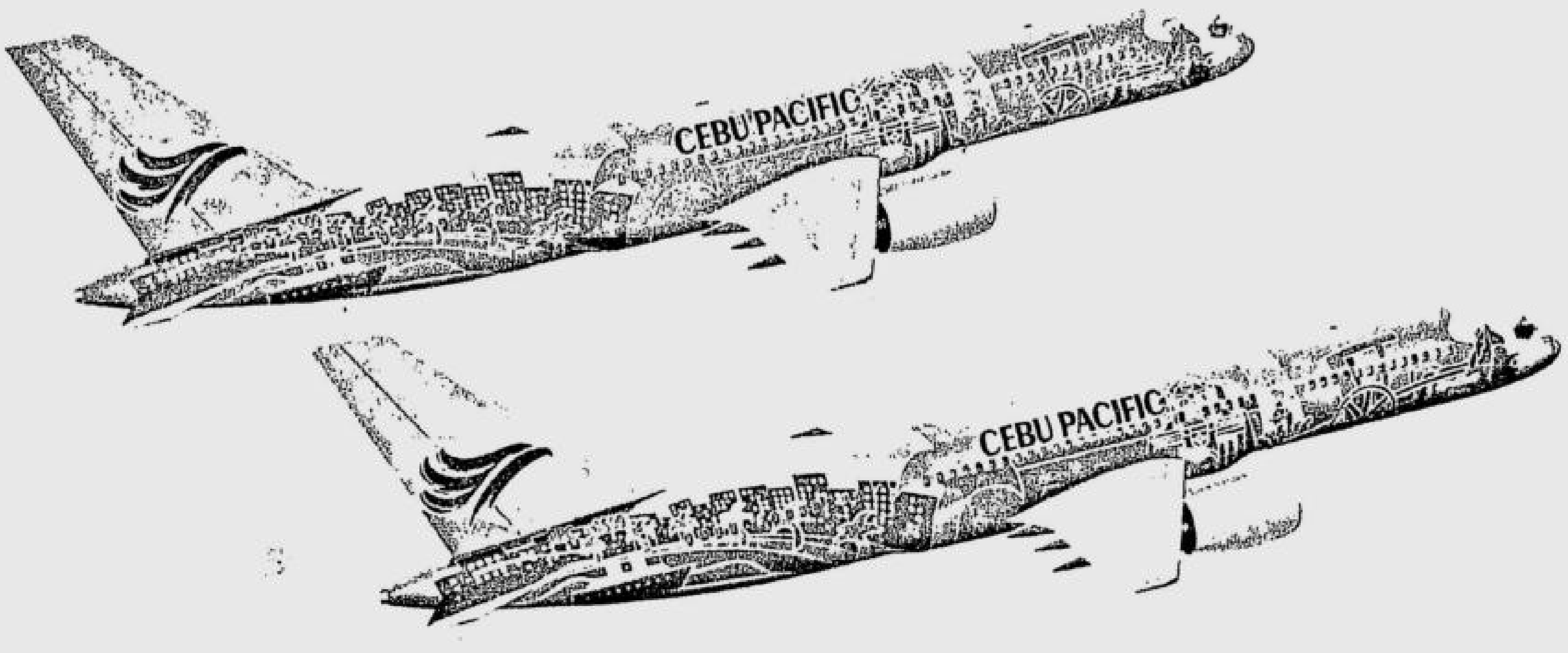

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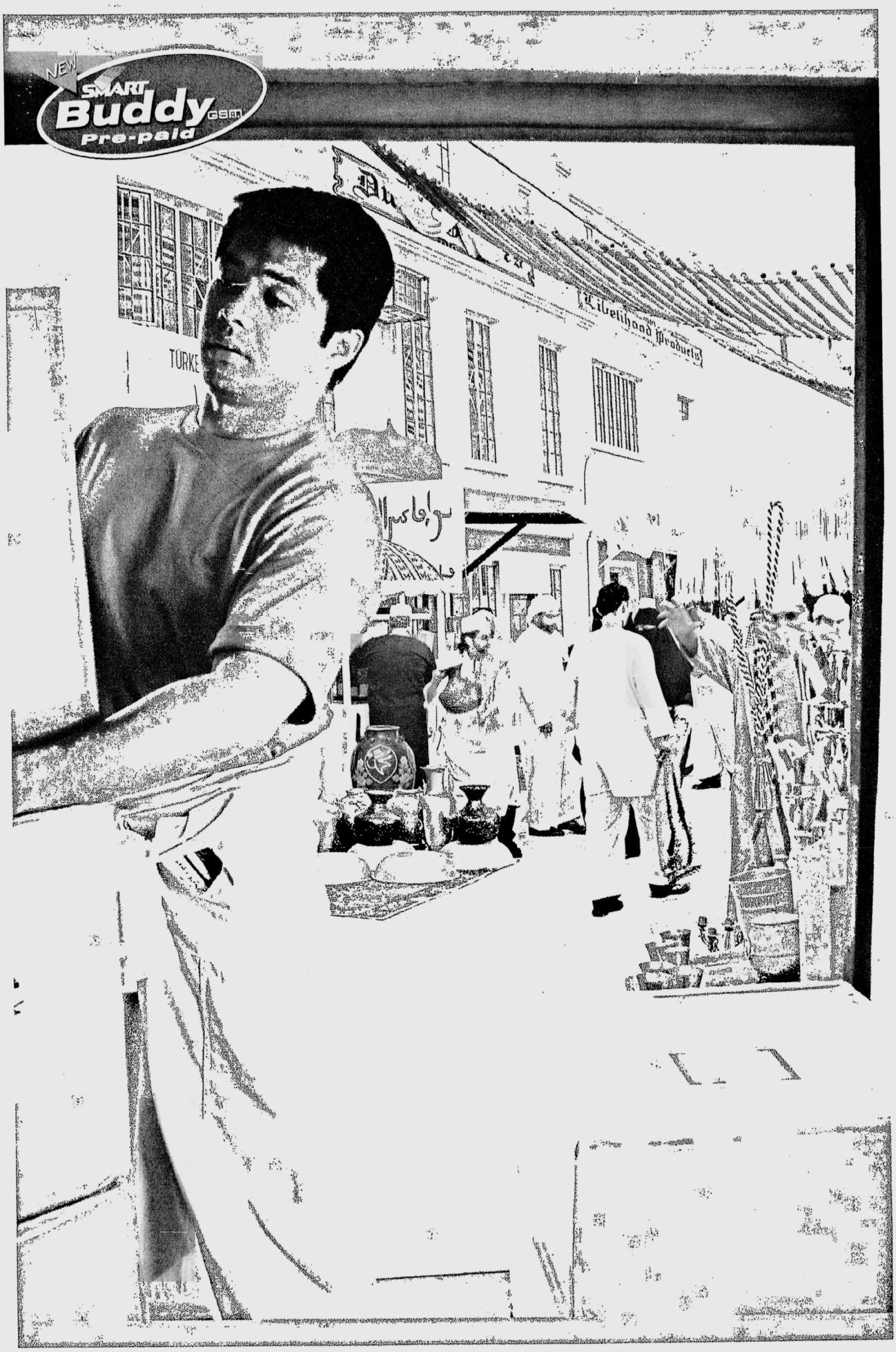
Per DTI-NCR Permit no. 0818, series of 2004.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THREE'S COMPANY. Christian Bautista, Bituin Escalante and Audie Gemora

Bituin Escalante and Christian Bautista are just some of the products of Trumpets Playshop, now on its 11th year

onstage 2nyt

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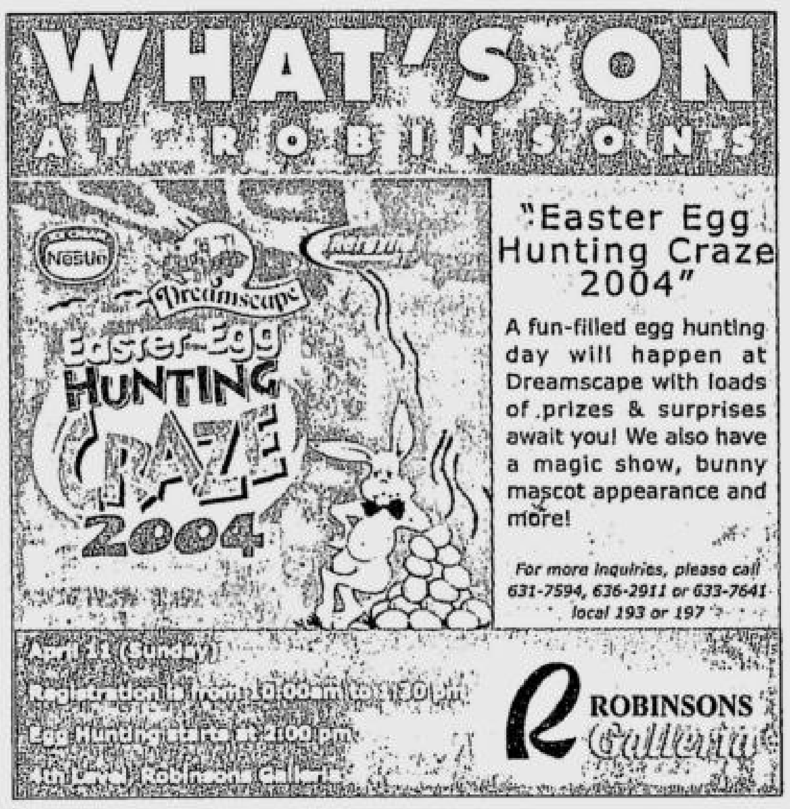
WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

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April 11 (Sunday)
Registration is from 10:00am to 1:30 pm
Egg Hunting starts at 2:00 pm
4th Level, Robinsons Galleria

ROBINSONS Galleria

Talent and artistry at play

Text by Allison W. Lopez
Photos by Randy Hormillosa

WITH mascara running on her cheeks, she moaned and whimpered to her lover, who was tied up on a chair: "Oh darling, please believe me, I'll never do you no harm, believe me when I tell you I'll never do you no harm..."

The audience suddenly erupted in laughter, and Audie Gemora, the teacher, reeled on the floor at the hilarious scene created by his then-student Bituin Escalante, with her real-life boyfriend, for their final showcase at Trumpets Playshop.

"She took the song totally out of context!" Gemora fondly recalled, as Escalante, now a pop diva, chuckled at the fond memory six years ago. "She was so creative, I couldn't stop laughing," he said.

JAMMING at Rockwell Club's gym, where Playshop will hold multimedia classes this summer

Summer workshop

Escalante, along with up-and-coming romantic balladeer Christian Bautista, are just some of the proud products of Trumpets Playshop, a summer multimedia workshop now on its 11th year.

Though both laughingly declared, "*Hindi kami* close," the chemistry between the two artists became palpable as they swapped stories about common denominators in their young lives—Playshop, theater and singing.

"Monster *ka rin*? Goblin *ako*!" chortled Escalante when Bautista mentioned his role in the Trumpets production of "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe."

Bautista, 22, the new kid on the music block, enroled in Playshop's advanced musical-theater class after graduating from college.

"Ever since, I had wanted to enrol because of my cousin Lala, who was involved in the play. I tried 'Advanced' 'cause I didn't want to pay for 'Basic,' then 'Intermediate'..." he said, laughing. "Fortunately I got into Advanced. Yay! Then later on, I auditioned for 'Lion, Witch,' and I got in as a ghoul!"

Escalante, now seven years in the entertainment industry, also enroled in the same class but in a different year. She was already dabbling in theater then. The two met in "ASAP," when Bautista joined the singing contest "Star in a Million."

"When we learned about the contest, we insisted to Christian [that he should] join," Gemora said. "He became the crowd favorite, the texters' favorite..."

"But I lost," said Bautista. "I didn't cry, though, and it actually turned out well. I got a deal from Warner."

Proving that he was destined for bigger things, Bautista recently launched his eponymous debut album.

Gemora's pride in his former students' flourishing careers is evident, but he's modest about it.

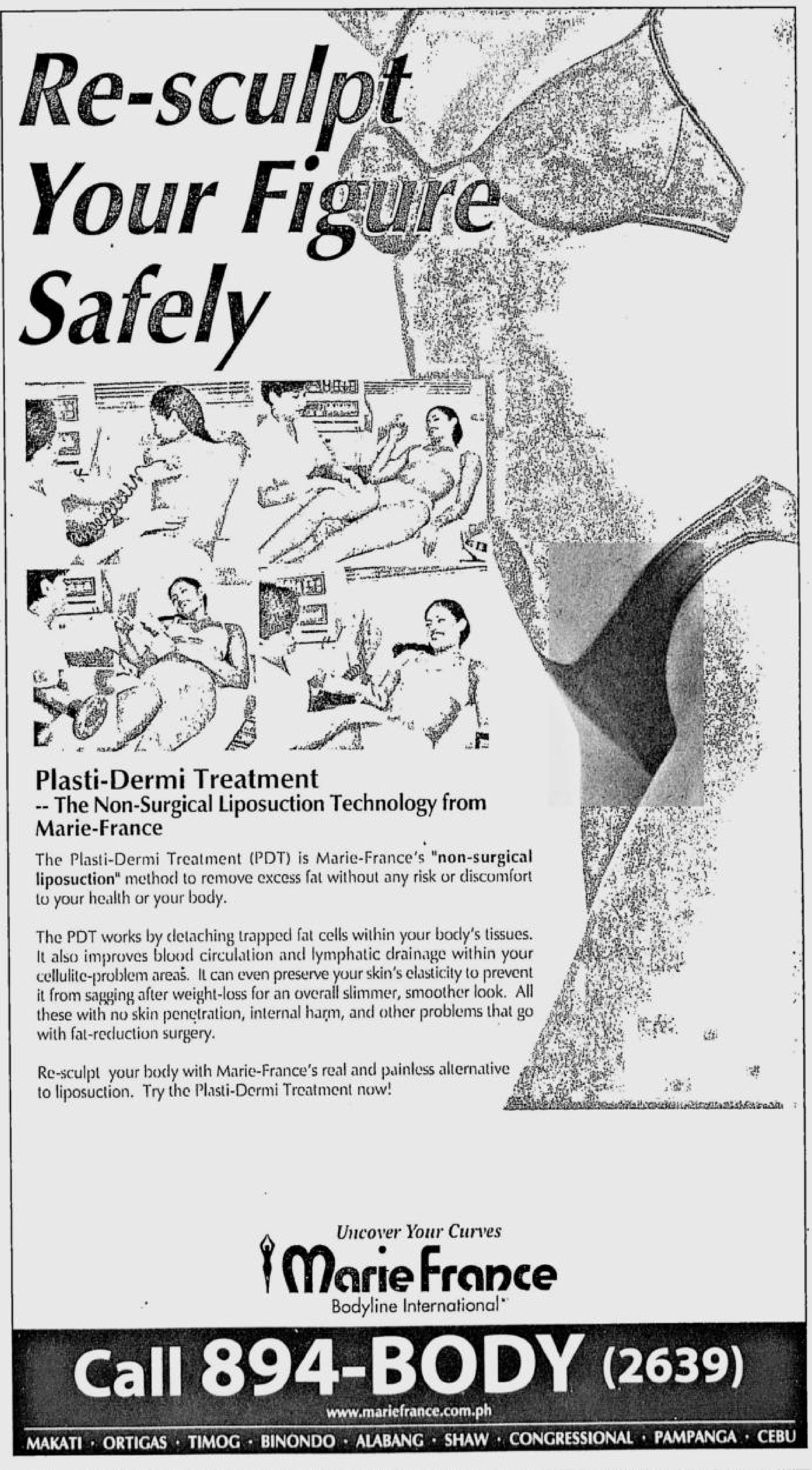
"We can't really take credit for their success," he said. "Say, the Akafellas, I didn't know half of those kids were with us, but it's heartening to know they took it on their own."

"But when asked about their credentials, everyone from Playshop says they've done Playshop," said Escalante. "I'm not saying this because I came from Playshop myself. It's an observation."

Incidentally, she, too, has a new album—her second—on the market.

R&B princess Kyla, MYX VJ Karel Marquez, international theater performers Sheila Francisco and Rommel Singson, TV broadcasters JC Gonzales, Joyce Ann Burton and Carlo Lorenzo, and commercial models Franco Mabanta, Khalil Kaimo and Paolo Valenciano are

TALENT/ G3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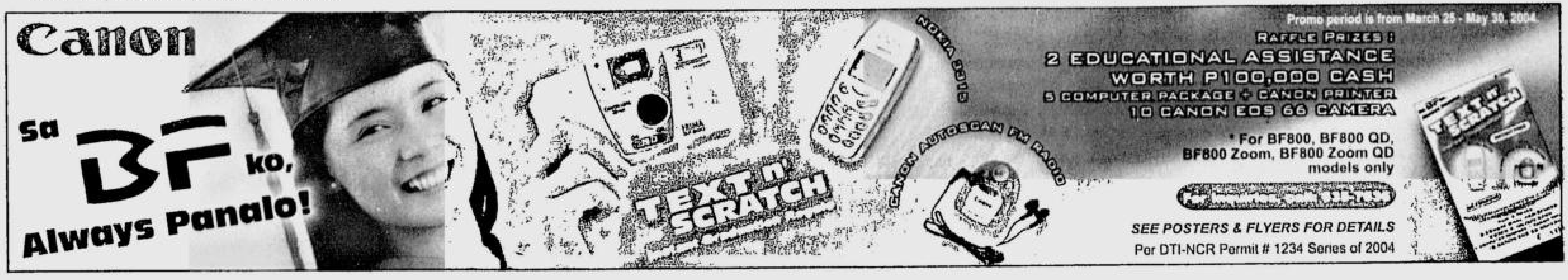
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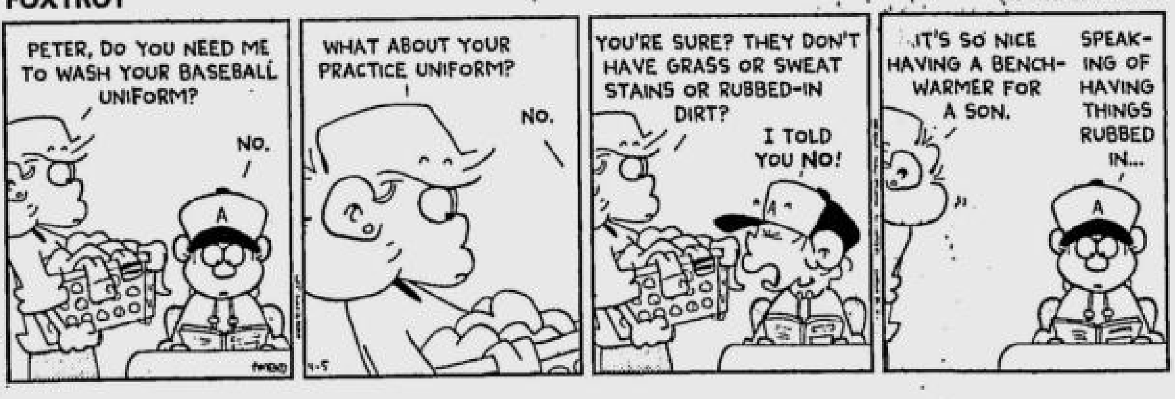
Per DTI-NCR Permit # 1234 Series of 2004

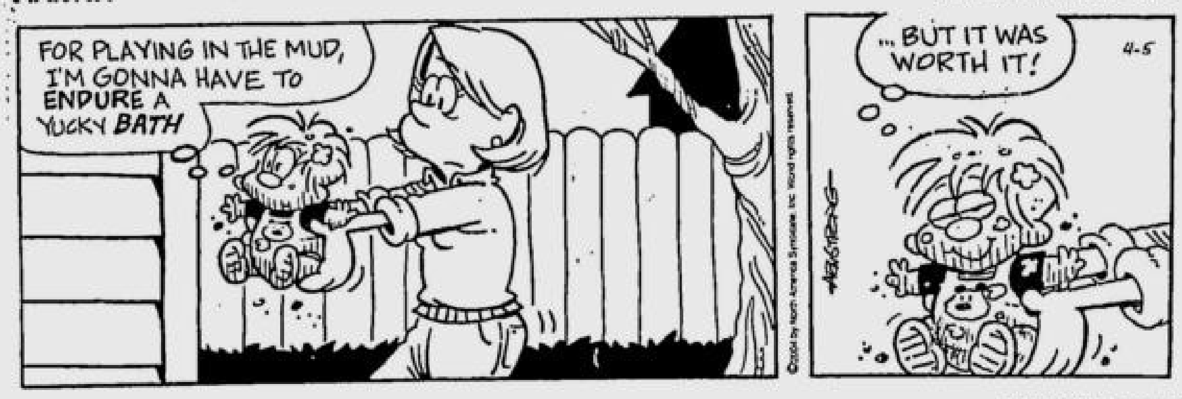
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


PETER, DO YOU NEED ME TO WASH YOUR BASEBALL UNIFORM?
NO.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR PRACTICE UNIFORM?
NO.
YOU'RE SURE? THEY DON'T HAVE GRASS OR SWEAT STAINS OR RUBBED-IN DIRT?
I TOLD YOU NO!
IT'S SO NICE HAVING A BENCH-WARMER FOR A SON.
SPEAKING OF HAVING THINGS RUBBED IN...
AMEND
4-5

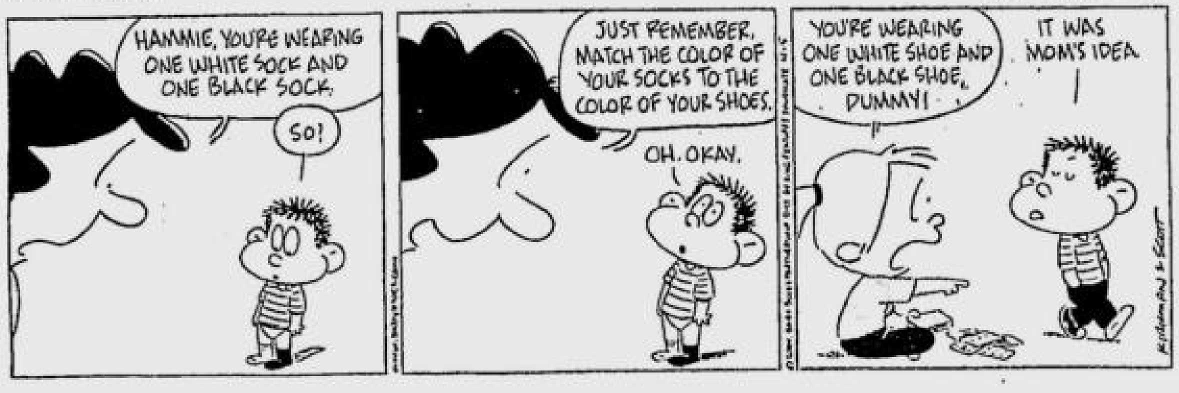
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


FOR PLAYING IN THE MUD, I'M GONNA HAVE TO ENDURE A YUCKY BATH
...BUT IT WAS WORTH IT!
4-5
ARMSTRONG

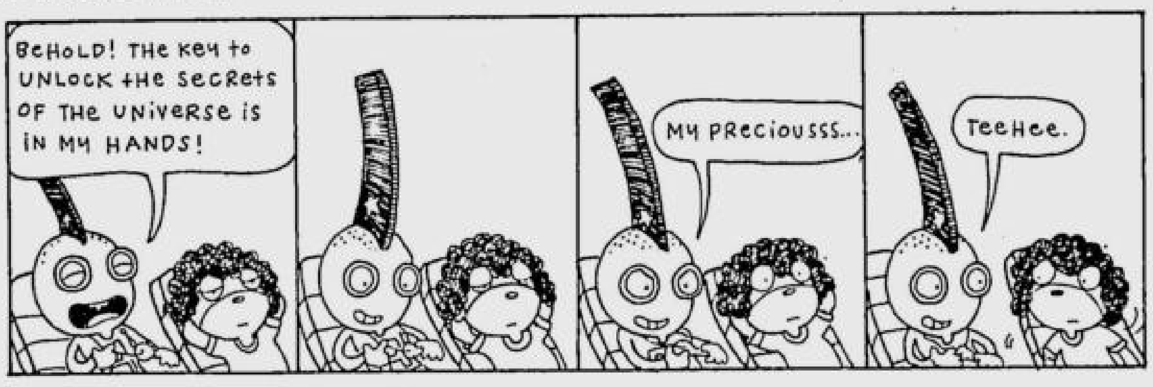
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HAMMIE, YOU'RE WEARING ONE WHITE SOCK AND ONE BLACK SOCK.
SO?
JUST REMEMBER, MATCH THE COLOR OF YOUR SOCKS TO THE COLOR OF YOUR SHOES.
OH. OKAY.
YOU'RE WEARING ONE WHITE SHOE AND ONE BLACK SHOE, DUMMY!
IT WAS MOM'S IDEA.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


BeHOLD! THe key to UNLOCK the SecRets OF The UNIVERSE is IN MY HANDS!
MY PRecIOUSSS...
TeeHee.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are hardworking and ambitious. You intend to make a name for yourself. Although you have star quality, you can be modest. You don't like controversy. You like to plow a straight line in life. (And you do this successfully.) Partnerships, marriage and all social occasions are your focus this year.
Birthdate of: Spencer Tracey, actor; Bette Davis, actress; Colin Powell, Secretary of State.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): It's a Full Moon today. Each Full Moon means that the Moon and Sun are opposite each other. Since the Sun is now in Aries, you're part of this equation!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Don't let things rattle you at work today. Today's Full Moon can make people edgy and nervous. Your best approach is to be diplomatic and patient with everyone.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Children can be affected by the Full Moon, just like adults (even pets). Be patient with young people. Everyone is a bit overamped today.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You need extra patience when talking to parents and bosses today. A natural friction exists because of today's Full Moon. Don't go looking for a fight. Be compliant and willing.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Today's Full Moon makes you want to win an argument, which is why you're trying to drive your point home. (People with nothing to sell and nothing to persuade are a delight to meet. You know it, and I know it.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're not sure about financial matters today. Do you put your own needs first or those of somebody else? This could be a tough call.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): It's a Full Moon in your sign today. You might feel restless and confused. You'll feel guilty if you put your own needs first, yet this is what you want to do. Just relax.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Today's Full Moon could cause some glitches at work. Customers or co-workers might be short-tempered. People feel emotionally riled up, as if they have a personal investment in everything.

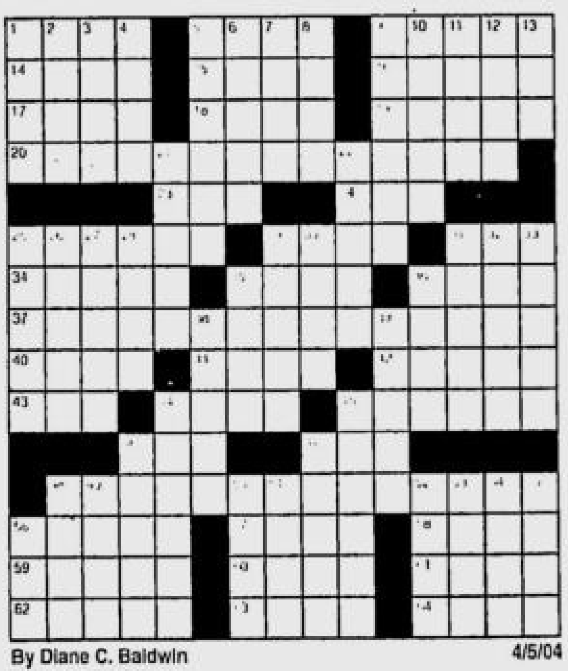
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Whatever you set into motion today will likely have a quick turnaround. Expect the best. Professional sports, show business and the hospitality industry look good.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Tread softly when talking to parents and authority figures today. Ditto for VIPs. Patience can avoid a clash of wills. (It works every time.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Be careful driving, jogging, walking, cycling and such. This is a mildly accident-prone day for you. It doesn't have to happen, but the Full Moon makes some people jittery.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is not a good day to shop impulsively for anything. (Although it's true—when the going gets tough, the tough go shopping!)

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD
4/5/04

ACROSS
1 Box office dud
5 Green Gables girl
9 "__ Shrugged"
14 Medicinal plant
15 Muddy the waters
16 Slake thirst
17 Truth twister
18 Work units
19 Pint-sized
20 Old
23 Slangy refusal
24 Annapolis grad
25 Aspects
29 Untold centuries
31 Keg feature
34 Take down a peg
35 Philosopher Immanuel
36 Jerk preceder
37 Old
40 "Riders of the Purple Sage" author
41 Part in a play
42 One-on-one contests
43 Pig's digs
44 Stuff to the gills
45 Australian city
46 Formicary resident
47 Nocturnal raptor
48 Old
56 Single-masted ship
57 By mouth
58 On the waves
59 Overthrow
60 Banjoist Scruggs
61 Grizzly nail
62 Like the banks of Loch Lomond
63 Caustic cleaners
64 Of two minds

DOWN
1 Cinderella's destination
2 Hodgepodge
3 Sound of pain
4 Ice float
5 Sports venues
6 Sea east of Great Britain
7 Close by, old-style
8 Ultimatum word
9 After-market purchases
10 Small musical ensembles
11 Dryer trappings
12 Egyptian life symbol
13 Clouds' milieu
21 Start to twine?
22 Tithing amount
25 Cobra's teeth
26 Scrub, NASA-style
27 Batsman of poem
28 Lay eyes on
29 Moon lander
30 As soon as
31 Memento
32 One Astaire
33 Violet's cousin
35 Lumber flaw
36 Gulf War missile
38 Fit to be tied
39 Pastoral poems
44 Waspish
45 Guzzles down
46 Oak-to-be
47 Chicago hub
48 As well
49 Subject of a sentence
50 Christmas song
51 Cafeteria tote
52 Savoir faire
53 Capital by a fjord
54 Bring up
55 Tiredness indicator
56 Hero

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

B	U	S	■	B	A	E	R	S	■	A	M	M	A	N
A	T	A	■	A	S	S	E	T	■	C	A	I	N	E
L	O	N	■	L	I	S	L	E	■	A	N	D	I	E
A	P	R	I	L	F	O	O	L	S	D	A	Y	■	■
N	I	E	C	E	■	■	A	L	P	■	C	E	O	S
C	A	M	E	T	W	O	D	A	Y	S	L	A	T	E
E	N	O	S	■	H	A	S	■	■	K	E	R	B	S
■	■	■	■	I	O	T	■	S	L	Y	■	■	■	■
P	E	S	C	I	■	■	S	H	Y	■	S	C	O	T
S	O	T	H	E	R	E	W	A	S	N	T	A	N	Y
A	S	I	A	■	E	N	A	■	■	O	L	D	E	N
■	■	F	O	O	L	I	N	G	A	R	O	U	N	D
H	E	F	T	I	■	S	N	E	E	R	■	C	E	A
E	L	L	I	S	■	L	E	R	O	I	■	L	S	L
R	O	Y	C	E	■	E	D	E	N	S	■	I	S	L

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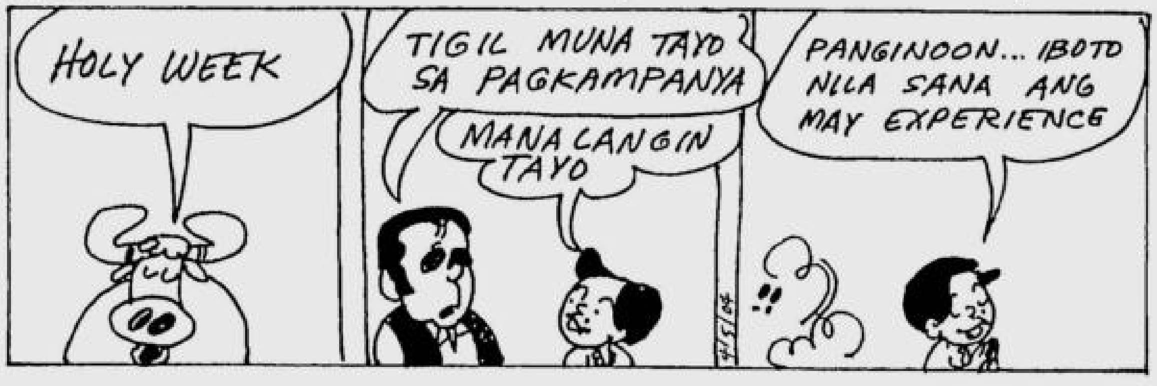
4/5/04

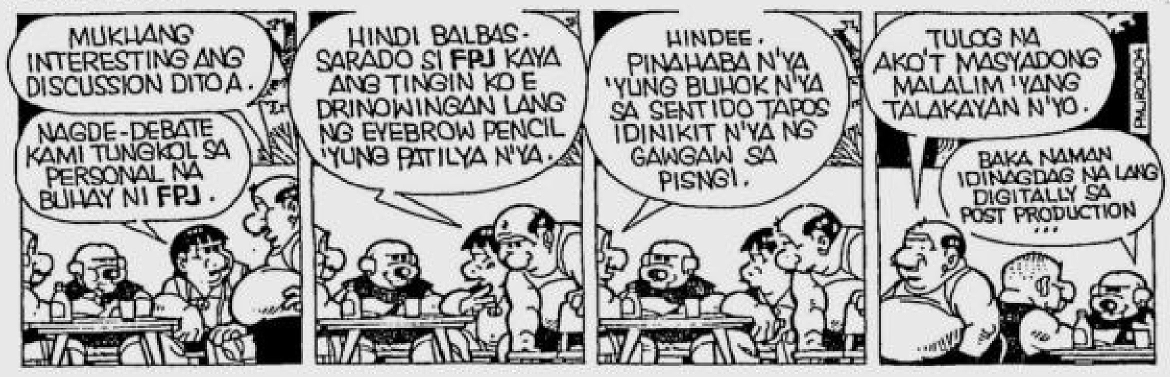
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


HOLY WEEK
TIGIL MUNA TAYO SA PAGKAMPANYA
MANALANGIN TAYO
PANGINOON... IBOTO NILA SANA ANG MAY EXPERIENCE
4/5/04

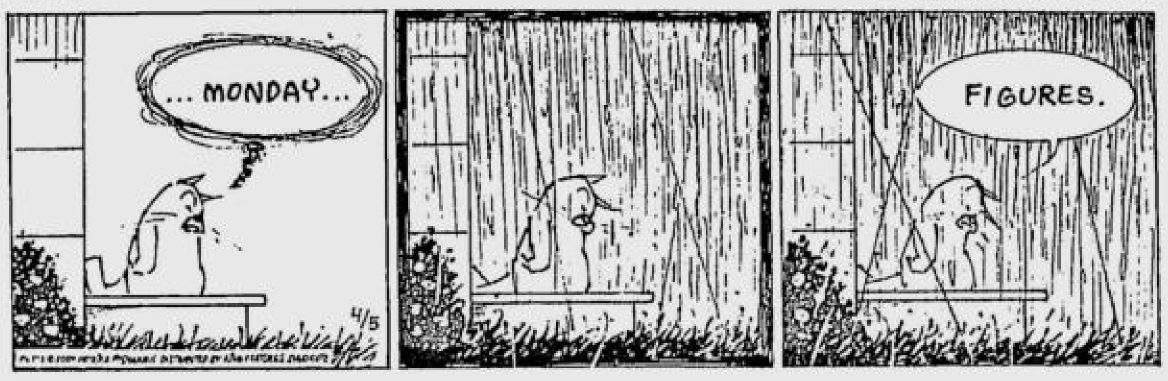
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MUKHANG INTERESTING ANG DISCUSSION DITO A.
NAGDE-DEBATE KAMI TUNGKOL SA PERSONAL NA BUHAY NI FPJ.
HINDI BALBAS-SARADO SI FPJ KAYA ANG TINGIN KO E DRINOWINGAN LANG NG EYEBROW PENCIL 'YUNG PATILYA N'YA.
HINDEE. PINAHABA N'YA 'YUNG BUHOK N'YA SA SENTIDO TAPOS IDINIKIT N'YA NG GAWGAW SA PISNGI.
TULOG NA AKO'T MASYADONG MALALIM 'YANG TALAKAYAN N'YO.
BAKA NAMAN IDINAGDAG NA LANG DIGITALLY SA POST PRODUCTION...
PALAROAD

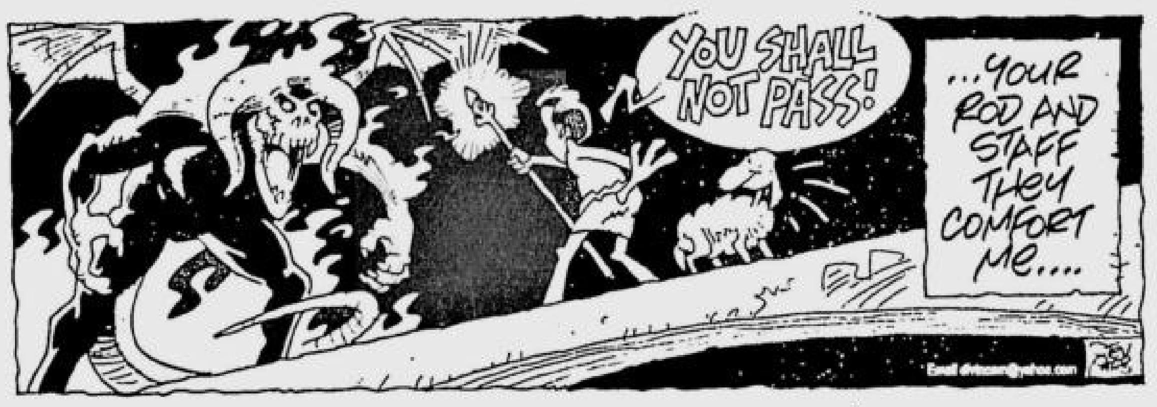
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


... MONDAY...
4/5
FIGURES.

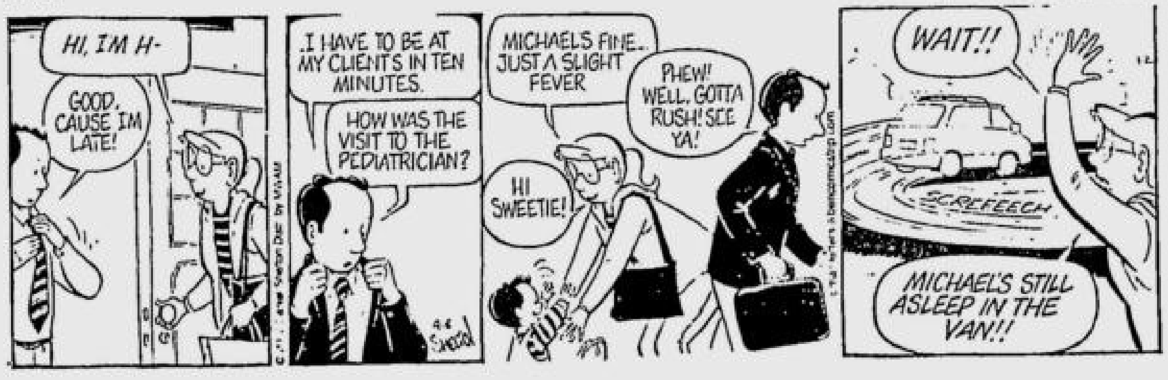
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


YOU SHALL NOT PASS!
...YOUR ROD AND STAFF THEY COMFORT ME....

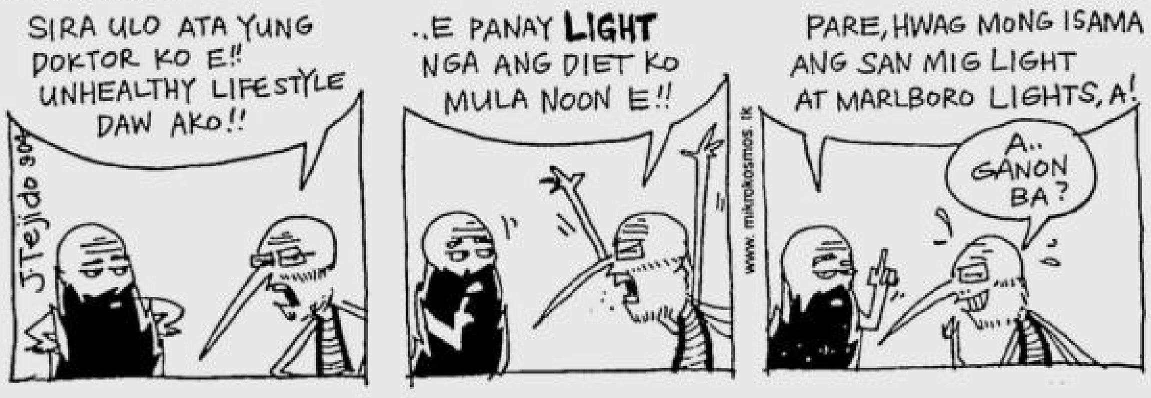
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HI, I'M H-
GOOD, CAUSE I'M LATE!
I HAVE TO BE AT MY CLIENTS IN TEN MINUTES.
HOW WAS THE VISIT TO THE PEDIATRICIAN?
MICHAEL'S FINE.. JUST A SLIGHT FEVER
HI SWEETIE!
PHEW! WELL, GOTTA RUSH! SEE YA!
WAIT!!
SCREEEECH
MICHAEL'S STILL ASLEEP IN THE VAN!!

MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO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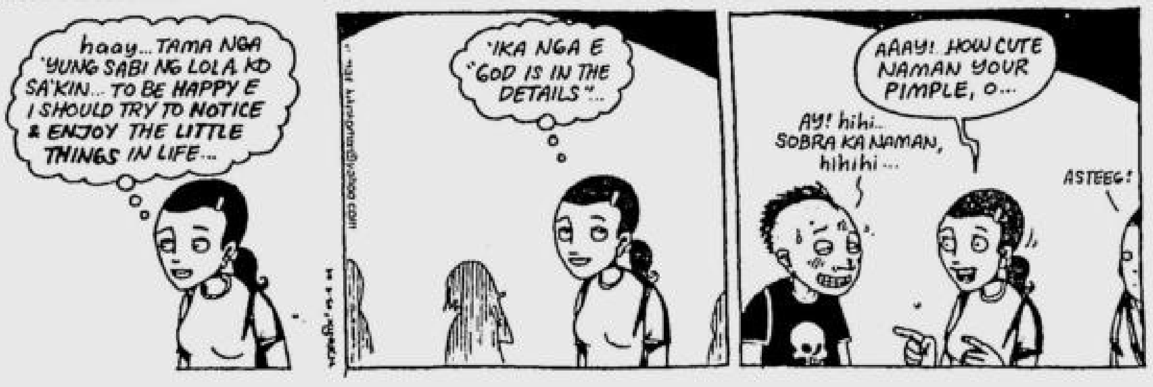
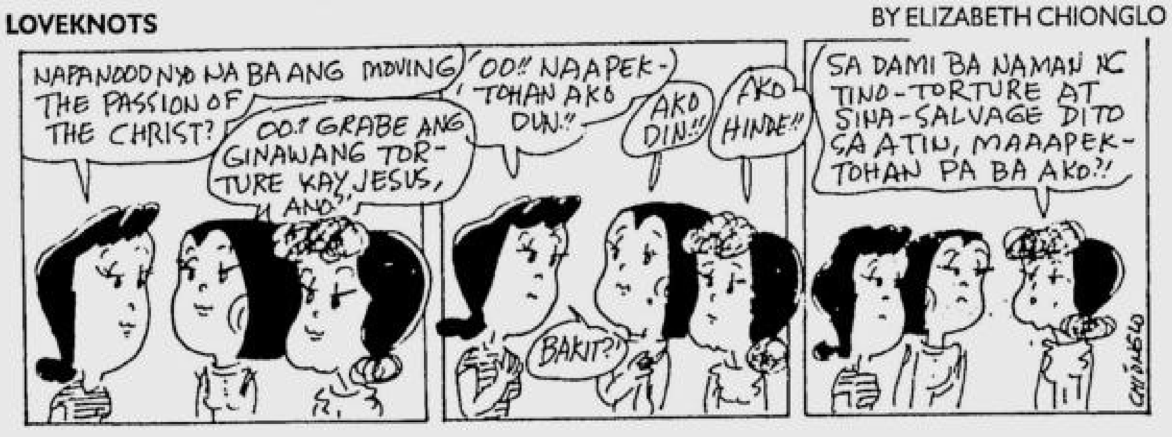
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


haay... TAMA NGA 'YUNG SABI NG LOLA KO SA'KIN... TO BE HAPPY E I SHOULD TRY TO NOTICE & ENJOY THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE...
'IKA NGA E "GOD IS IN THE DETAILS"...
AAAY! HOW CUTE NAMAN YOUR PIMPLE, O...
AY! hihi.. SOBRA KA NAMAN, hihihi...
ASTEEG!

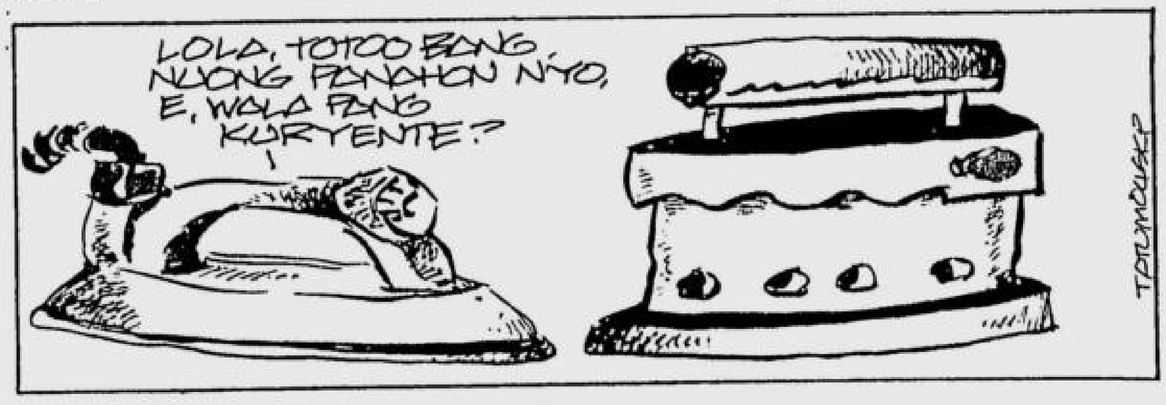
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NAPANOOD NYO NA BA ANG MOVING THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST?
OO! GRABE ANG GINAWANG TORTURE KAY JESUS, ANO?
OO!! NAAPEKTOHAN AKO DUN!
AKO DIN!!
AKO HINDE!!
BAKIT?!
SA DAMI BA NAMAN NG TINO-TORTURE AT SINA-SALVAGE DITO SA ATIN, MAAAPEKTOHAN PA BA AKO?!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


LOLA, TOTOO BANG NUONG PANAHON N'YO, E, WALA PANG KURYENTE?
TATUMOUSKI

Talent and artistry at play

From page G1

just some of Playshop's talented alumni.

Diverse mix

The diverse mix of graduates is due to the variety of workshops offered. Aside from theater classes for children and adults, there are also classes for Acting, Voice Lessons, Street Dancing, Modeling and Photography. Animation and Hosting are the latest additions, with PhilCartoons' Roli Sabado and hosting legend Eddie Mercado at the helm.

"Eddie Mercado is the obvious choice," said Gemora. "He's been into hosting for around 50 years, and with him every word is understood and enunciated."

The demand for hosting is high, Gemora added, as it is integral in a business where artists are required to do spiels and make the audiences feel comfortable during their shows and concerts.

World-class performers and respected veterans also comprise the Trumpets faculty. Among them are theater stalwarts Freddie Santos, Jaime del Mundo, Carlo Orosa and Chari Arespacochaga, Sweet Plantado of The Company, classical singer Lionel Guico, playwright Luna Griño-Incocian, the Manoeuvres, first-rate jazz dancers James and Liesl Laforteza, and supermodels Tweetie de Leon-Gonzalez and Patti Bettita.

"We build up character, we build up confidence. It's more important than the talent. That's why they [our students] enjoy themselves. We accept you whoever you are, we meet you wherever you are. You go by your own pace," said Gemora.

Playshop is not called Playshop for nothing. Gemora said the experience is different from others because it is not performance-based. Kids, especially, have nothing to fear, as Playshop teachers are not allowed to scream or to curse at their students. These methods are considered counterproductive.

"To us it's not just after getting them to love the craft. In other places it's so important that they will do everything to pound it into you—assassinating your character, tearing you down. These are techniques of the past that are very harrowing for a lot of people," said Gemora.

"It only takes a teacher who's very powerful with words, and words can really kill a character, like saying 'You're stupid! *Wala kang talent! Hindi ka magaling kumanta!*' We're very careful with that."

Addressing the kids out there, Escalante said, "It's better than school. It's fun, so don't be scared because it's not gonna be like school."

WINNERS. He lost in the "Star in a Million" finals, but snagged a record deal with Warner Music. She, on the other hand, has a new album and is a much-sought-after performer.

"*HINDI kami* close," the two artists declare. But their easygoing rapport says otherwise.

Playshop is not shy in saying it employs a God-centered approach on its program. According to Gemora, art is just a means to hone a talent. Here, the craft is but the instrument to improve the person.

For Bautista, the musical theater class and voice lessons he took up helped him prepare for all the challenges he's facing now in his budding show-biz career.

His advice to other hopefuls? "You should really follow your heart, and don't let fear stop you. Don't let other people say you can't do this. If you know in your heart you can do it and you want to do it, then do so."

Playshop registration is ongoing. Classes will be held on April 12-June 5. Playshop venues are at the Stageworx, 5/L Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong City; Alabang Town Center; Steps Dance Studio, Bldg. C, Karrivin Plaza, Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati; and at the Rockwell Club. Call 6362842/6335010 or visit the office at 6/L Carpark, Shangri-La Mall, Mandaluyong City. E-mail playshop@i-manila.com.ph

Musical depicts Michelangelo

FREDDIE Santos teams up with composer Von de Guzman in the musical, "Il Divino" (The Divine), a musical about Michelangelo.

The production combines elements of the stage musical, oratorio, cantata, satire, MTV and documentary to bring out the different facets of the artist's personality.

Audie Gemora renders the role of the great Renaissance artist, while Pinky Marquez plays Vittoria Colonna, the Muse who obsessed him.

"Il Divino" goes on stage at the Music Museum on May 6, 7 and 8. Call 7216726.

AUDIE Gemora and Pinky Marquez in front of Michelangelo's death mask of David

Metro names hot bodies, hot gadgets, hot secrets

METRO releases two issues featuring sizzling fashion coups. The summer special includes a fashion spread of society babes in bikinis, and a collector's edition that names the most beautiful bodies in town.

Made in the tradition of the Body Calendar, Metro's summer special is a bikini spread showing designer Katrina Tantoco, model Alexi Alunan, restaurateur Jeni Psinakis, model Lucy Watmore, Web designer Marta Tuason, preschool teacher Bow Valdez, and celebrity turned Pilates instructor Plinky Recto, who shares the story of her transformation in the cover story.

Other articles: the Boracay diary of Louie Cruz (scandals, inside info, and never-before-seen photos); Manila's Top 10 undiscovered attractions; and secrets of smart packing by globe-trotting celebrities and socialites.

The collector's edition, Metro's Best of the Best, names the people whose bodies we love to lust after, the stylemakers whose fashion sense never seems to fail; the newsmakers who actually made us feel good about being a Filipino; and the must-have products and gadgets that promise beauty, sophistication, or just a higher degree of cool; and the best movies, books, or tourist destinations.

The issue gathers some of the biggest names in society, show biz and politics (as well as a few surprises): Tessa Prieto Valdes, Assunta de Rossi, Joe Salazar, Piolo Pascual, Kris Aquino, Victor Neri, Jerry Yan, Aubrey Miles, Maurice Arcache, Hilario Davide. It is one of the largest gathering of personalities in Philippine magazine history.

Both issues of Metro are available in leading bookstores and magazine outlets.

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To qualify for the million-peso shopping spree at Rustan's, newly subscribed Globe Handyphone users must have their G-Flex Plans or G-Plans approved and activated by April 18, 2004.

Three (3) winners will be drawn on April 21, 2004 by authorized Globe and DTI representatives. They'll be taking home great prizes that include a P10,000 Rustan's gift certificate (3rd Prize), P30,000 Rustan's gift certificate (2nd Prize), and P1 million shopping money at Rustan's (Grand Prize).

Winners will be notified through phone and registered mail. Prizes must be claimed within thirty (30) days after notification.

The lucky grand prize winner will be given exactly one hour to shop and spend her P1 Million shopping money to her heart's content at Rustan's Makati.

So ladies, go ahead and write that shopping wish list! But make sure to put a Samsung-Globe Handyphone Plan on top of your list to avail of the best plan deals in the country that enable you to enjoy all things fancy and feminine, including a million peso shopping shebang!

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Savvy Phones for the Fashionista

To match her many moods and fashions, users can choose from four unique Samsung phone models that come with a Globe Handyphone plan. There's the Samsung C100 dual band phone which features a 65K color screen display and enhanced JAVA technology for easy instant downloads- FREE on G-Talk or G-Flex 1200; the ergonomically designed Samsung X100 with the most vivid color screen available for MMS and an amazing 40 polyphonic sound-FREE on G-Match or G-Flex 2500; the Samsung X600 which boasts a bar type multi-function phone with an integrated VGA Camera, complete with flash and lens that can rotate by 180 degrees-FREE on G-Match or G-Flex 2500; and the Samsung E700 model which is an attractive dual-band flip phone with a dual colored LCD and a built in camera with a multi shot function-FREE on Platinum Plan or G-Flex 5000.

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LIESL Batucan (right) with her dance students Mylene Hernandez, Ayam Barredo, Phoena Baranda and Amparo Sietereales in "Fame"

THE WOMEN of "Hudhud": Shamaine Centenera-Buencamino and Bayang Barrios (top), and Mila Rose Romero and Nina Rumbines

S.S. José with the Kurugo dancers in "M. Butterfly"

First-quarter report card in the performing arts

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THE FIRST quarter of the year was a period rich in music and, to an extent, dance.

Even in a straight play (with a same-sex couple as characters!) like "M. Butterfly," music played an important role. The drama was exploited to the full by actors Miguel Faustmann and S.S. José. But it was the music from Puccini's "Madame Butterfly," beautifully integrated by director Baby Barredo, which heightened the production.

On the other hand, dancing took center stage in another Repertory Philippines production directed by Barredo (and also at Rep's Globe Theater-Onstage), "Fame the Musical," with choreography by Jaime del Prado. It showcased the young Pinoy's innate ability in singing, dancing and acting.

Was it my imagination? An illusion? For two heart-stopping moments during the ballet "Don Quixote" at Star Theater, it seemed that Lisa Macuja—held aloft on one side of her waist on one hand by premier danseur Osias Barroso—was about to fall. But the difficult series of lifts were accomplished without mishap, to great applause.

Macuja and Barroso that evening were celebrating 16 years of dancing partnership, and there was much to celebrate. The two said that their partnership had endured due to patience, discipline, mutual respect, a sense of humor and no fault-finding if something went wrong.

CONDUCTOR Rodel Colmenar with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra

"The Best of Philharmonic in Jeans," billed as a pop concert, was more of a rock concert, as a seatmate observed.

You know, the kind where you are enjoined to sing along, clap in rhythm, stomp your feet and, at one point, even to dance. Mercifully, no one took up the challenge, or the staid Philamlife Theater would have been transformed into a giant discohouse.

Representing classical music was opera singer Nolyn Cabahug, who uttered the best quip of the evening: "I'm supposed to be a tenor, but after tonight my friends will call me *tinorture*."

In reaching out to the youth, should the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) play this kind of music? The audience seemed to think so. For they gave the MPO and its young and articulate resident conductor, Gerard Salonga, a standing ovation.

Rousing

The rousing "Hudhud," an Ifugao epic directed by Nanding Josef for the Cultural Center's Tanghalang Pilipino, is an important contribution to Filipiniana theater. It is an antiwar treatise on womanpower which merges the performing arts, including chanting. As the storyteller Apu Baket, Shamaine Centenera (alternating with Bayang Barrios) was affecting, almost incandescent.

Many major talents were involved in the production, including composer Chino Toledo, choreographer Agnes Locsin, playwright Nicolas Pichay, set designer Kidlat Tahimik, light designer Monino Duque, and translator Romulo Baquiran Jr.

"Hudhud" should go on national tour next year.

"Duyog" (Visayan for sharing) was an intimate and informal concert held at the PCIB-Equitable Auditorium. The objective was to raise funds for the victims of the landslide which struck Southern Leyte during the new year, and which claimed many lives.

Gov. Rosette Yñiguez-Leiras gave a moving account of the tragedy. Among the fatalities were a mother and daughter found clasped in each other's arms.

Leiras appealed for more funds to help the survivors and the families of the victims. Donations may be sent to the Office of the Governor in Maasin City, capital of Southern Leyte, or to the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. account of the Diocese of Maasin.

The main performer was US-based classical guitarist Michael Dapdap, and it was almost a family affair because most of the artists were his relatives. And the collaborating pianist was his best friend, Bert Robledo of dzFE-FM's "Bravo Filipino" program.

Impressive baritone

Baritone Noel Azcona impressed opera buffs during the 3rd Pasig Summer Festival with his powerful, resonant yet mellifluous voice.

Formerly with the UST (University of Santo Tomas) Singers, Azcona is now undergoing further studies abroad. He would make a good Mephistopheles in Charles Gounod's opera "Faust," which unfortunately has yet to be staged in the Philippines.

Notable was the "Kayumanggi" concert of the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra under conductor Eudenice V. Palaruan, and the San Miguel Master Chorale. The opening number alone —Francisco Feliciano's "Silence My Soul," based on a poem by Tagore—was worth the price of admission (although my ticket was complimentary).

The singers were strategically placed around the balconies of CCP's Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo, and their beautiful voices resounded all around you.

The sacred music of Asian (and that includes Filipino) composers was played that evening. Some of the composers were present, and took a bow. All in all, it was a triumph for composer Ryan Cayabyab and the musicians and singers under Palaruan, who conducts with flair and style.

The Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) is celebrating its 30th year. It recently played under conductor laureate Oscar C. Yatco, no less, with Cebu-born pianist Albert Tiu brilliantly interpreting the formidable Piano Concerto No. 1 of Brahms.

The PPO's 2003-2004 season ends with Mahler's Symphony No. 8 ("Symphony of a Thousand") on April 16, and it will be the swan song of Italian conductor Ruggero Barbieri.

When the 21st concert season opens in September, the PPO will be under a *balikbayan* from California, Eugene Castillo.

NIÑA Clariza Dichoson, Nerissa Kristal Buenconsejo and Kristine Velez (back row); Kathleen Mae Sugay, Angela Sebastian, Ma. Regina Salonga and Holly Molina (second row), and Faye Lorraine Baclit

Ballet recital

THE PINK Toes Center for the Performing Arts, headed by director Araceli Valera-Root, presents "Damdaming Pinoy: Ikalawang Yugto," 5 p.m., April 17, at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Part I will showcase Filipino-Asian musical pieces to be performed by Pink Toes piano and voice students. There will be contemporary pieces by Nicanor Abelardo, Antonio Molina and Lucio San Pedro, and a medley of well-loved Filipino songs.

Part II will feature Filipino- and Asian-inspired ethnic, contemporary and classical dance pieces by Tony Fabella, Mylene Saldaña, Stanley Cañete, Robbie Hayden and Johanna Enerio. There will also be a short story-ballet using Ludwig Minkus' "Lazos de Amor" from "Don Quixote."

Students will do a take on the Maria Clara theme by using different props like handkerchief, castanets, cane, fan, tambourine, garland and *manton*.

Call 6682118 or 6785330.

Last call for musical theater workshop

GANTIMPALA Theater Foundation, in cooperation with the National Parks Development Committee, announces its last call for enrollment in the Summer Musical Theater Workshops on April 14 to May 29, at the Rehearsal Hall of the Concert at the Park Auditorium, Luneta, Manila.

Classes include Children's Musical Theater and Musical Theater for Teens and Adults.

The still-untitled recital of the children's theater class will feature a showcase of well-loved fairy tale and Filipino cartoon characters, while the teens and adults class will present "Urbana at Felisa," an original Filipino musical.

Enrollees must bring a 2"x2" colored picture. Tuition is P5,000. Call 5365860 or 5280603; or visit the Gantimpala office, 2/F, Open-Air Auditorium, Luneta.

FORMER Gantimpala Workshop participants

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30 years as duo pianists

By Della Gamboa Besa
Contributor

AS a child, I could never understand what was meant by the saying "Time flies." Did not all clocks, after all, move at the same rate of speed?

But as I grew up, I came to realize that as one gets older, time not only flies, it positively zooms. So one day I woke up and it hit me that my partner Annie de Guzman and I were nearing the 30th anniversary of a performing career as duo pianists.

Quite early in my piano-playing days, I had discovered how much more fun there was to be had when playing with somebody else—a singer, an instrumentalist, an orchestra and particularly another pianist.

There were long discussions on music to be had, a whole different repertoire to be explored, opinions to be shared and not the least of all, a companion with whom to while away that awful backstage waiting time before coming out to play.

And from the more practical point of view, I also was aware that solo pianists were everywhere, coming out of the windows almost, and to be noticed, one had better be doing something somewhat different.

My partner of choice was Anamaria Gregorio de Guzman, a classmate at St. Scholastica's College.

The late Sr. M. Scholastica Benitez, OSB, first Filipino dean of the School of Music, was responsible for getting us together; she had asked us both to perform at the 25th anniversary of the school's traditional St. Cecilia's Concert, using as bait the prospect of lessons with the renowned Benjamin Tupas.

We actually needed very little urging, and so on Nov. 20, 1973, we made our debut as duo pianists, performing the Poulenc Concerto in D Minor for Two Pianos at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, accompanied by what was then called the CCP Symphony Orchestra (later the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra) conducted by professor Luis Valencia.

Breathing the rarified atmosphere of the performing arts was a heady experience, and both being natural-born hams, we were totally captivated. We had also seen how difficult it was to get back in shape after years of musical inactivity, and were loath to let all the hard work go to waste, so we decided—two young wives and mothers—to embark on a performing career, and take it as far as we could.

We had no idea then how far that would be, but we were determined to try. Today, I think I can honestly say we did not fare too badly.

Supportive

Looking back, we must also say that we would never have lasted as long as we have were it not for extremely supportive spouses and children. How many chauvinistic Filipino husbands would have stood for their wives traipsing all over the country (and later abroad) performing concerts? Or even put up with the hours spent rehearsing—an activity that completely excluded them?

But that they did—perhaps not always in perfectly good humor; they never gave us a hard time—and we are very appreciative of and thankful for their patience and support. As time went on, they showed pride in what we were making of ourselves as professional musicians.

Our children were equally cooperative, and my five sons and two daughters very quickly learned that I was *never* to be disturbed when I was at the piano (you either spoke up before the practicing began, or forever held your peace), as did Annie's three, a boy and two girls.

ANNIE de Guzman and the author

They put up with the sound of piano music first thing in the morning, and the inability to play "their" music as they wished, faced with an onslaught of "our" classical music.

I must say my warming-up scales would always trigger the sound of bedroom doors closing, but it did not take too long before they were making knowledgeable post-performance comments like: "You made a mistake, '*no*?"

Wonderful teachers

In the course of building a career, we came under the tutelage of wonderful teachers and coaches, all of whom we owe a debt of gratitude: Ben Tupas, of course, who not only gave us insights on music but led us through eating adventures spiced with much laughter and delicious stories; Marieta Cruz, she of the bionic ears, who painstakingly taught us little tricks of technique not many would have taken the trouble to impart; and Joey Contreras, whose pointed comments and running litany of what could be misconstrued as insults, belied real affection for us and concern for our playing, and a "*pusong mamon*" he tried so hard to conceal.

Annie's original teacher, Sr. M. Cecile Donato, OSB, passed away shortly after we started performing, but my own teachers, Pilar Buencamino Larracas and Rosie Banaag Larracas, have continued to inspire and encourage me with the most heartwarming compliments about my playing, and by their undisguised pride in my accomplishments.

Annie likes to tease me about not being totally faithful as a partner. I do admit to a few infidelities—performances with other artists—but I remind her that she did trigger a hiatus in our playing by deciding to go into business.

During those years, I took on another partner, Mary Ann Armovit, another Scholastican friend with whom I had shared a teacher, and with whom I had the good fortune of getting a French government grant to take master classes in piano ensemble in Paris for a few months.

But it speaks volumes of the strength of our relationships that when Annie decided to resume playing, it was as if nothing had changed, and now all three of us occasionally perform together, good friends all around.

We have also included in some performances another good friend and colleague, Raul Sunico, and titled the concerts "Quadrille." Our families laughingly liken us to the three witches from Macbeth, so intertwined are our professional and personal lives.

It has been a good 30 years—a continuous learning process, full of joy and laughter and enduring friendship. Making music together has enriched our lives in a manner like no other.

God has been very good to us, and we can only hope that we have been worthy of His blessings.